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PC GAMER

...nes Magazine

The PCGamer 1997 Preview

Huge 32-page guide to the games you'll be playing in 1997

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ON THE CD

TERMINATOR: SKYNET
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MICROSOFT GOLF 3
BATTLESHIPS
KILL, KRUSH 'N' DESTROY
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ALIEN TRILOGY
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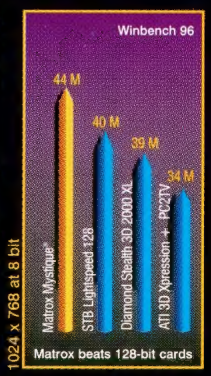

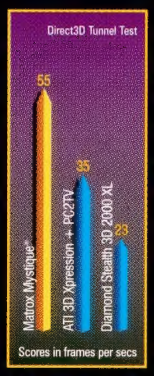

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Diamond Stealth 3D 2000XL	23	14		✔		✔	✔	

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All Winbench 96 and Direct 3D tests conducted by Matrox Graphics Inc. on a Gateway P5-166 configured with Intel P5-166Mhz, 16MB of EDO RAM with 256K cache. Matrox Mystique, Diamond Stealth 3D 2000XL and ATI 3D XPRESSION + PC2TV were configured with 2 MB of memory for the PCI bus using driver releases 3.16, 4.03.00.2101 and 3.0 respectively for Windows 95. STB Lightspeed 128 was configured with 2.25 MB of memory using driver release 1.22 M. WinBench 96 1.0 tests conducted at 1024 x 768 resolution with 8-bit color at 75Hz refresh using large fonts under Windows 95. © Monster Truck Madness Microsoft Corp. Monster Truck Madness was tested in first person view, with dashboard off, map off, sky texture on, horizon on, smoke effects on, image quality high, texture normal,scenery complex, shadow normal, smoothing on, tire tracks and particles. Test conducted at full screen 640 x 480 @ 16 bit. Score indicates maximum frame rate. Direct 3D tests done using Tunnel from the DirectX 2.0 SDK. Diamond Stealth 3D 2000XL and ATI 3D Xpression + PC2TV tests were conducted at 512 x 384 @ 16 bit while Matrox Mystique tests were conducted at 640 x 400 @ 16 bit based on Gouraud shaded, perspective correct textured, point sampled, 16-bit per pixel color, dithered rendered polygons.

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PC GAMER
Issue 39 January 1997
PC Gamer, Future Publishing Ltd,
30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW
Tel: 01225 442244

Editorial

Fax: 01225 732275
Electronic mail: pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk

Editor James Flynn
Deputy Editor Steve Owen
Production Editor Ashley Young
Editorial Assistant Mark Donald
Art Editor James Blackwell
Deputy Art Editor Chris Bates
Contributors Steve Faragher
Simon Williams Jonathan Davies
Grant Rencourt James Ashton
Simon Cox John Houlihan
Dean Evans David Woods
Trevor Witt Danny Wallace
Daniel Griffiths Ed Ricketts
Thanks to Mike Woodford of Try Me First Antiques

Advertising

Fax: 01225 732282
Electronic mail: jpagett@futurenet.co.uk

Ad Manager Jo Pagett
Sales Executive Judy Bailey

Future Publishing
Executive Staff

Publisher David Roberts
Assistant Publisher Jon Bickley
Circulation Director Sue Hartley
Group Managing Director Greg Ingham
Chairman Nick Alexander

Operations Staff

Pre-Press Services Manager Jon Moore
Scanning & Imagesetting Simon Windsor
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Paper Controller Fiona Deane
Print Services Manager Matthew Parker
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Circulation Pete Walker
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Subscriptions and Customer Services

Future Publishing Ltd,
FREEPOST BS4900, Somerton,
Somerset TA11 6BR
Tel: 01225 822511 (subscriptions)
Tel: 01225 822510 (customer services)
The subscription rates for 12 issues, including postage, are:
£47.40 (£59.40 CD) in the UK
£67.50 (£79.40 CD) in Eire
£87.50 (£99.40 CD) other countries

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Mark Williams Tel: +44 (0)171 331 3920
Fax: +44 (0)171 447 3499
E-mail: mwilliams@pnc.co.uk

This magazine comes from Future Publishing Ltd, the largest and most sinister publisher of computer game titles in Europe. Other British magazines include:
Edge, PC Format, PC Plus, PC Answers, PC Review, PC Guide, Your Problem, Sega Power, Living Alone, Amiga Shopper, Amiga Format, The Band, CD-ROM Today, Loud & Bumpy, Total and *T3*.

All contributions are submitted and accepted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, or license others to do so, unless otherwise agreed in advance in writing.

UK and overseas newsstand distribution:
Future Publishing Ltd – 01225 442244

ABC 45,190 Jan-June 1996

Printed in the UK, on paper.
All material © Future Publishing 1997

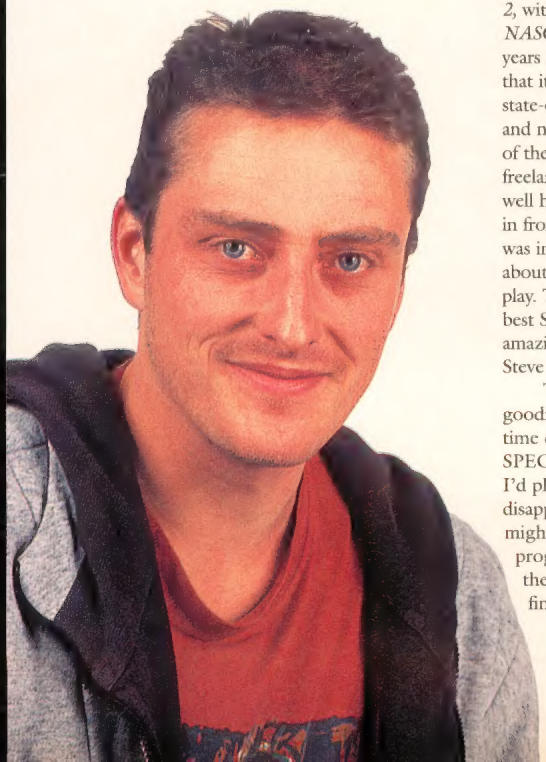
PC Gamer is on-line on the Internet as part of FutureNet. Accessing it is free; just point your Web browser software at: http://www.futurenet.co.uk

Next issue on sale: Friday 17th January, 1997

Here's to 1997...

I FEEL TERRIBLE. APPROXIMATELY 33 years ago Steve Faragher was born, and slightly under 17 hours ago the decision was taken to celebrate this fact at several local drinking establishments, all of which specialise in serving strong, head-cracking beer. We were, as the more keen eyed of you will have perhaps gathered by looking to the left, also out to toast young Steve Owen's promotion to Deputy Editor. Deciding that it is rather poor form to mix two completely unrelated festivities, we naturally decided to have a beer night for Steve (No. 1) and a simultaneous lager/spirit night for Steve (No. 2). It all became a little less structured, but I think everyone went home happy.

One of the themes throughout the night was a general sense of looking forward to the future as opposed to constantly reliving the past. Anticipation is a perpetual and expensive frustration for most PC users on the hardware front but one which cannot be rivalled for excitement as the latest software catches our eyes and makes us go forth and spend. To usher in 1997 for the PC it seemed only right to cover both sides of the coin.



The traitorous Simon Cox has returned to the Light Side of PC journalism on page 70 to provide us with an insight into the hardware improvements that are certain to transform PC games beyond all recognition during the coming year. Accompanying this is the traditional PC GAMER 1997 preview, including over 300 new games which you'll be able to play in the coming year. By the way, if you've ripped the supplement to pieces trying to peel off the stickers as opposed to slitting the pages apart with a scalpel, I beg you not to write in and complain.

Staring out to my right today I can see a very pretty Christmas tree clinging to the wall outside my window. It has blocked my perfect view up the street, but in an effort to cling to the remnants of Christmas I can forgive it that. To my left Steve is playing our game of the month, *NASCAR Racing 2*, with the sound turned down. When the original *NASCAR* arrived in the EDGE offices a couple of years ago we were all firmly under the impression that it had somehow managed to break our, then, state-of-the-art 486/66 PC. Its deathly slowness and niggly bugs are legendary, so the appearance of the sequel elicited a frenzy of calls to our freelancers to take it off our hands. We might as well have been asking people to volunteer to stand in front of a firing squad, though, and eventually it was installed on to Steve's PC. I've learnt two facts about *NASCAR* during the past week of constant play. The first is that Papyrus now have one of the best SVGA engines around, and the second is that, amazingly, not all oval tracks play the same after all. Steve can tell you the rest on page 92.

There you have a mere inkling of the goodies to be found within this issue. Particularly time consuming will be the CD GAMER SPECIAL. It represents virtually every PC game I'd play today, and considering the number of disappointing scores in the last couple of issues, it might be an idea for some designers and programmers to have a look and remind themselves of what makes a great game. And finally, I hope you like the photo. I don't.

James Flynn, *Editor*

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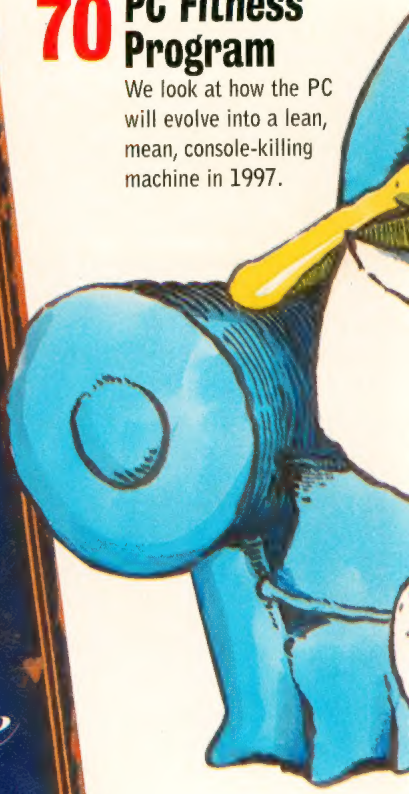

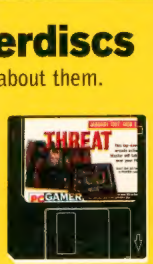

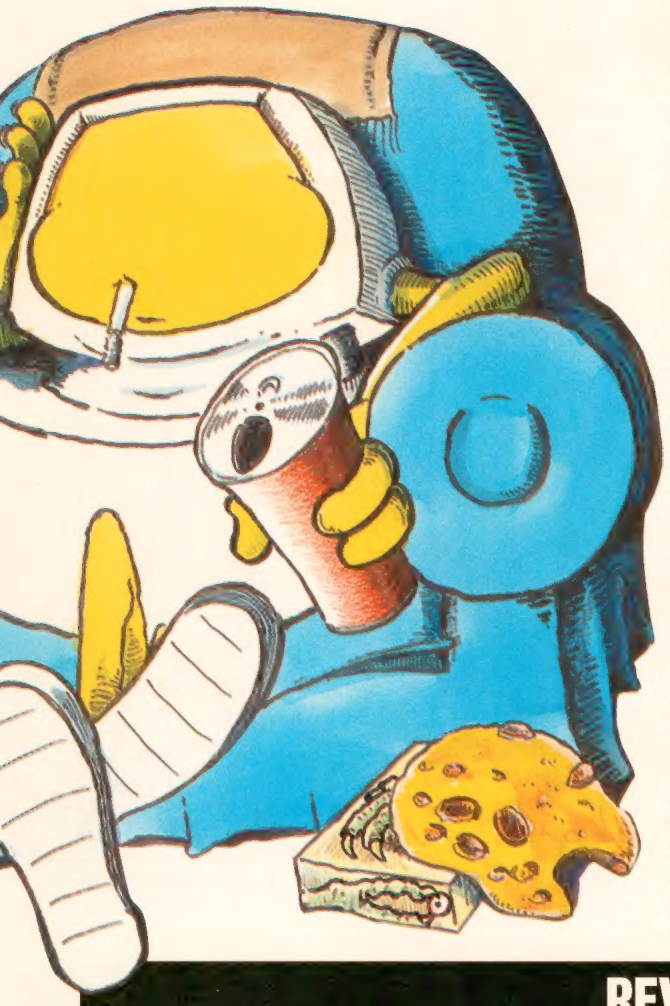

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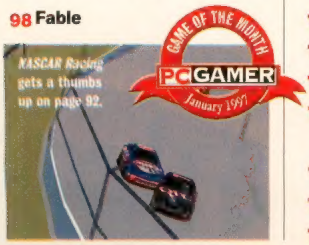

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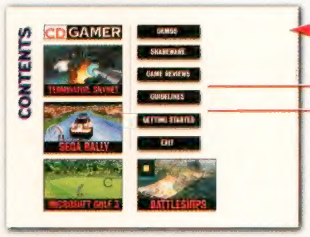
The final leg of our world tour of game sites and the definitive *Daggerfall* site.

CD GAMER

CD GAMER the Windows way

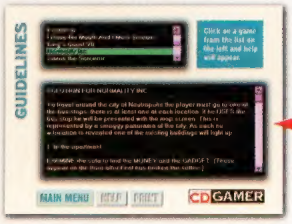
As well as our regular CD GAMER packed with all the latest gaming fun, this month we bring you a second CD, overflowing with the best 50 game demos of all time. Details of these appear on page 12, and CD-less readers should turn to page 10.

ALMOST TOO MUCH GAMING FUN!
CD GAMER
Over 20 Demos!
TERMINATOR: SKYNET
Playable demo of Bethesda's next smash hit!
SEGA RALLY
The best ever arcade racer hits your PC!
MICROSOFT GOLF 3
Microsoft's huge-selling sequel!
BATTLESHIPS
Giant rolling demo!
All the game patches out there!
Issue 39 January 1997
PLUS! A ton of top demos including KILL, KRUSH 'N' DESTROY • VIRTUA COP • ROBOTRON X • SCORCHER • ALIEN TRILOGY • HUNTER HUNTED • RISK • BLAM! MACHINEHEAD • Many more • Reviews database • And the best shareware

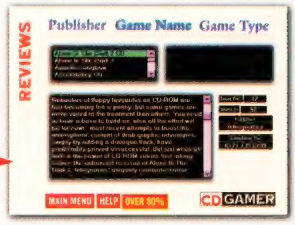


Here's the main menu, from which you can install and play any of the demos and shareware games, and also access the reviews and tips libraries.

Once you've got CD GAMER running (full instructions are on the back of the case), this screen gives access to the main demos, the rest of the CD or, heaven forbid, an exit back to Windows.



The tips and solutions section contains masses of information to help you out of tricky spots. We'll be adding more stuff each month.



The reviews library has details of every game we've reviewed in PC GAMER, nearly, including scores and some text. We promise to update it completely soon.

Sega Rally

Sega

Pentium 90 (Pentium 133 recommended), 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, DirectX 3

A one-track demo of the PC conversion of one of Sega's most popular arcade games, *Sega Rally*. You can install *Sega Rally* from the CD GAMER Windows menu, and the setup program should automatically install DirectX 3 onto your system if it is not already installed.

CD GAMER via DOS

CD GAMER from DOS looks a little rudimentary, but, hey, it's what's inside that counts – right, readers? From here you'll be able to access all the patches and WADS along with any DOS-only demos, though not Windows-only demos nor the reviews and tips.

Terminator: SkyNET

Bethesda

486DX2/66, 8Mb RAM, MS-DOS

SkyNet is the latest interactive spin-off from the popular Terminator series of movies, and this playable demo features an early mission from the final product. Here's a list of important keyboard commands to get you started:

CONTROLS:
Turn Left/Right – Mouse
Look Up/Down – Mouse
Fire – Left Mouse Button
Throw – Right Mouse Button
Forward – A
Back – Z
Slide Right – X
Slide Left – Left SHIFT
Run – ALT
Jump – S
Crouch – C
Automap – TAB
Menu – ESC
Full Screen – F6
Decrease Brightness – F7
Increase Brightness – F8
Toggle Sight – F9

WEAPONS:
1 – Pipe/Motion Tracker
2 – Uzi/Assault Rifle/Machine Gun
3 – Shotgun
4 – Grenade Launcher
5 – Rocket Launcher
6 – Laser Rifle/Cannon
7 – Phased Plasma Pistol/Rifle/Cannon
F1 – Molotov
F2 – Pipe Bomb
F3 – Grenade
F4 – Cannister Bomb
F5 – Satchel Charge

Microsoft Golf 3

Microsoft

486DX2/66 (Pentium 90 recommended), 8Mb RAM (16Mb recommended), Windows 95

Practise your golfing technique with this playable demo featuring three holes of play at the Banff Springs course. Installation is handled by the GAMER Windows menu and control is handled completely by the mouse, with combinations of button clicks for the swing action.

Battleships

Hasbro

486DX, 8Mb RAM, Windows 3.x or 95, Quicktime for Windows

A multimedia presentation of the forthcoming conversion of Battleships, the perennial favourite two-player game. This demo requires Quicktime for Windows, which can be installed from the Getting Started section of the CD GAMER Windows menu.

KKND

Electronic Arts

Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, MS-DOS

Try out a level from this new top-down real-time strategy game from Electronic Arts. The first part of the installation is handled by the PC GAMER DOS menu, this will unzip the files into a temporary directory and you should then change to this directory and type INSTALL C:. The installation program will then copy the relevant files to another directory and then run through a setup procedure for your sound and graphics hardware before you can load the game.

Virtua Cop

Sega

Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, DirectX2

Another conversion of a hit Sega arcade game, this time *Virtua Cop* shoots it out on your Windows 95 desktop, and our playable, first-level demo certainly delivers plenty of action. The *Virtua Cop* setup program will attempt to install DirectX 2 onto your PC if it is not already detected, and this occasionally does not set itself up correctly. So if you encounter any missing file errors when trying to load the game, simply use Explorer to run the file DXFULL.EXE, located in the UTILS\DIRECTX2 directory on the CD-ROM.

Alien Trilogy

Acclaim

486DX2/66, 8Mb RAM, MS-DOS

A first-person perspective shoot-'em-up based around the three Alien movies. Installation is handled by the CD GAMER DOS menu and this game sometimes has problems with EMM386, so if you find yourself staring at a blank screen for a considerably long time, then simply edit this out of your CONFIG.SYS. Here's a selection of the most common control keys:
Ctrl – Fire 1
5 on keypad – Fire 2
Space bar – Do/Use
< – Strafe Left
> – Strafe Right
1-5 – Select weapon
6 – Next weapon
Backspace – Turnaround
Caps lock – Run mode
Shift – Run modifier
Alt – Strafe Modifier
Tab/ESC – Weapon select
PAUSE – Pause

Robotron X

Williams

Pentium 75, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, DirectX 2

Classic arcade action is given the Windows 95 multimedia treatment in this reworking of the excellent *Robotron X*. *Robotron X* will run directly from the CD-ROM, but it is not happy working with the CD GAMER Windows menu, so you'll have to run the file ROBOTRON\ROB032.EXE manually through Explorer. Requires DirectX version 2 or higher, which can be installed from the CD GAMER Windows menu or through Explorer from the UTILS directory.
Controls:
Move Up\Down – E\D
Move Left\Right – S\F
Fire Up\Down – I\K
Fire Left\Right – J\L
Pause\Option Screen – ENTER

Ultimate Warrior

AD Studios

Pentium 60, 8Mb RAM, MS-DOS, VESA 2.0 Compliant Adaptor or Emulator

Ultimate Warrior is a great 2D beat-'em-up game demo from fledgling programming team, AD Studios. It installs from the GAMER DOS menu and requires a VESA 2 compatible graphics card or a suitable emulator, such as the shareware program Display Doctor, which can also be installed from the menu. AD Studios are currently seeking funding from an enthusiastic software house.

BLAM! Machinehead

Core Design

Pentium 75, 16Mb RAM, MS-DOS

Experience the first level of *Blam! Machinehead* in our playable demonstration version on this month's CD GAMER. Installation is processed by the DOS menu and control is handled by a combination of mouse and keyboard controls. Check the options screen for more information.

Scorcher

Scavenger

Pentium 75 (Pentium 90 recommended), 8Mb RAM (16Mb preferred), MS-DOS or Windows 95 with DirectX 2

A two-track demo of *Scorcher* is featured on the CD GAMER DOS and Windows menu. Basic keyboard controls are:
Up/down – Speed/brake

Before You Start

We strongly recommend that you free up as much expanded memory as possible. You can do this by editing the config.sys file yourself.

Type EDIT\CONFIG.SYS <ENTER> from the C:\ prompt, and a screen will appear. Look for the line which has the words emm386.exe in it. Replace the text which appears after emm386.exe with the word RAM. The line should now look something like this: device = c:\dos\emm386.exe RAM

Alternatively, one easy route to more memory is to use the memmaker program. This should be undergone carefully, especially if you use a boot menu or a joint DOS-Win/Win 95 set-up.

Please note that we have come across compatibility problems with PCs using CD-ROM cache programs other than MSCDEX, which is supplied with MS-DOS. The most up-to-date version is included on CD GAMER.

The DOS Menu

Put the CD into your CD-ROM drive and select it by entering MS-DOS, and typing D:<ENTER> or whichever letter you use for the CD.

Start the menu by typing go<ENTER>. If you are running Win 95, we recommend that you start your PC in Command Prompt Only mode and follow these same steps. If you run the DOS menu from a DOS box, it is not recommended that you run it in a window or ALT-TAB away from it.

The Windows 3.1 Menu

To start the Windows 3.1 menu select Run from the File menu. Enter the letter of your CD-ROM drive then run the file PCG.EXE. A new program icon will appear on your desktop. Double click the PC GAMER icon to launch the menu. This menu includes only the Windows 3.1 games. You need to use the DOS menu to get at all the DOS games.

The Windows 95 Menu

Insert the CD-ROM and a menu will appear, giving you the options of running the menu, exploring the CD-ROM, or returning to Windows. Select the Run menu to see this month's games. This menu includes both the Win95 and Windows 3.1 games. You need to use the DOS menu to get at the DOS games.

Got A Problem?

If your CD is defective, please return it to the address below. Please make sure you have followed our installation procedures correctly to ensure that there is a physical problem. Please send the CD along with a description of the fault plus a self-addressed envelope. Return postage will be paid.

PC GAMER CD Returns
Diskxpress
Seven Willow Court
Bourton Industrial Park
Bourton-on-the-Water
Gloucestershire GL54 2HQ

A CD should only need replacing if the CD itself cannot be read. If, instead, you are experiencing problems with an individual demo or application, phone our technical support line. This is open between 9.30 am and 6 pm from Monday to Friday.

Tel 01225 442244
Fax 01225 732279
e-mail: support@futurenet.co.uk

Please note that the help-line staff provide assistance with technical problems directly related to our cover CD and cannot provide training on software or hardware in general.

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Scorcher cont.

Left/right – Turn left/right
Shift – Change between views
Tab – Field of view
Alt – Boost
Ctrl – Jump

Cyber Gladiators

Sierra

Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, DirectX 2

An early demo version of Sierra's *Virtua Fighter*-style 3D beat-'em-up featuring a couple of characters and one- or two-player action.

Hunter Hunted

Sierra

Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, DirectX 2

Play an early level from *Hunter Hunted*, and read the review on page 124.

Amber: Journeys Beyond

Graphic Simulations Corporation

486DX2/66, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, SVGA (16Bit Colour), Quicktime for Windows

An Interactive demo featuring the office location from this highly polished adventure game.

Ashes To Ashes

Corel

Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, DirectX

More *Doom*-style action in this futuristic, first-person perspective, shoot-'em-up from Corel.

Simpsons Cartoon Maker

Fox

486DX, 8Mb RAM, Windows

Create you own Simpsons cartoon with our interactive demo version of this new product from Fox. The save is disabled in this demo.

Jack Nicklaus 4 – Course Designer

Accolade

Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, DirectX 3

Demonstration version of the course designer for *Jack Nicklaus Golf 4*, which should be available early in the new year.

Soul Trap

Microforum

Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, DirectX 2

An unusual three dimensional platform puzzle game. The demo features some early levels from the finished game.

Back To Baghdad

Military Simulations

Pentium 90 (P133 recommended), 16Mb RAM, MS-DOS

This is possibly the most technically accurate simulation of the F16 available on a home computer. *Back To Baghdad* can be installed from the DOS menu but you'll need to be patient when you attempt to run it, as it take a few minutes to build up its graphics database and it's very reliant on a fast processor and plenty of RAM.

Risk

Hasbro

486DX, 8Mb RAM, Windows 3.x or 95, Quicktime for Windows

Another conversion of a popular board game by Hasbro. This time the excellent strategy game Risk receives the multimedia treatment. Our Windows tour of the game certainly whets the appetite.

DirectX 2 Warning!

Some of the playable demos on this month's CD require the installation of DirectX drivers onto your Windows 95 system. These drivers have been designed by Microsoft to increase the speed of games and multimedia applications running under the Windows 95 environment by allowing direct access to the relevant hardware devices inside your PC. However, early versions of DirectX were not compatible with certain graphics cards and caused the default driver for Windows to be overwritten and, in some cases, severe corruption to the display itself, only allowing access to the poor 16 colour screen mode. These problems are quite rare, but because they do exist, PC GAMER has taken the following steps to limit the possibility of this occurring with one of our readers. First, we have placed a copy of DirectX version 3, a far superior product, on the CD GAMER Windows menu itself, which we would strongly recommend using, and, second, we will list some possible solutions here for those of you who still experience difficulties.

The most common problem is a display driver problem, and there are a couple of ways to solve this. You should first enter Windows 95 under safe mode, which is accessed by pressing the F8 key when the computer starts up and displays the message starting Windows 95, and then selecting the relevant option from the menu that appears. Once Windows has loaded, you should right-click on an empty area of desktop and select properties from the menu that appears. When the display properties window is onscreen, select the settings tab, and then click on the change display type button. You will then have the option to choose the relevant adaptor type to suit your particular graphics hardware. If this does not work, it is a good idea to allow Windows 95 to start as normal and then run the added new hardware program within the control panel to re-detect the graphics card you have. It is likely that you may have to remove the currently selected driver from the Device Manager under the System properties Window before this program will find any new devices.

Please note: In very severe cases of a DirectX conflict, these suggestions may not solve the problem and, regrettably, the only solution may be a complete reinstallation of the Windows 95 operating system. Please bear this in mind before attempting to install a DirectX game or the DirectX drivers.

On the floppies

Insert either of the supplied floppy disks into your drive, exit to DOS and log onto your floppy drive by typing A: followed by return. At the A prompt type GO followed by return and follow the instructions that will be displayed on your screen. Some games may require information from both disks, so be ready to change them over when prompted.

Stars!

Empire

A demo version of this popular space exploration game for Windows. Once the game has been unzipped from the floppy disk to your hard disk, restart Windows and load the *Stars!* executable file located in this new directory.

Threat

Shareware version

An overhead, shoot-'em-up, action game featuring plenty of nasty aliens and awesome power-ups. Once installed, change to the new directory on your hard disk and run the *Threat* executable file to start the game. DOS only.

Got A Problem?

If, after following the above steps, you're still having trouble, or if the game simply won't install at all, it's just possible that you have a defective disk. If you're convinced that a disk is dodgy, return it to the address below and a new, working version should be returned to you within 28 days.

PC GAMER January Disk, TIB PLC, TIB House, 11 Edward Street, Bradford, BD4 7BH.

F22 LIGHTNING II™

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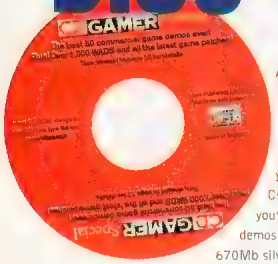
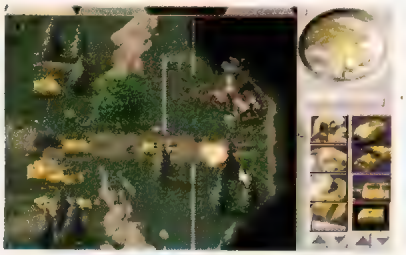
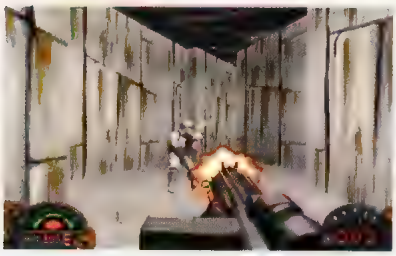
NOVA LOGIC™

DISC 2 – CD GAMER SPECIAL



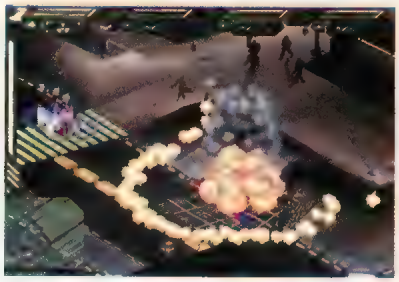
As a generous New Year's present for PC owners, we present a terrifyingly comprehensive collection of demos for your gaming pleasure. On CD GAMER SPECIAL you'll find the best 50 game demos we could cram onto our 670Mb silver disc. And we feel that they represent a sizeable portion of the best PC games ever released (see list below). As if this were not enough we've also included 1,000 additional levels for *Quake, Doom, Doom II, Hexen, Descent* and *Duke Nukem 3D*. To save space, only the DOS menu has been included on this disc. To get it all running change to your DOS prompt and type D:\GO, where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive.

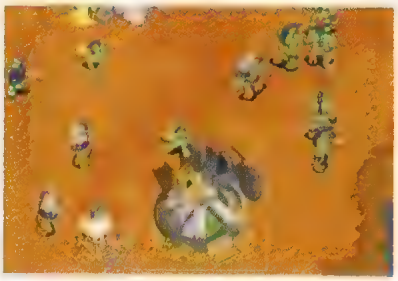




The game demos featured on this bumper CD are:

Command & Conquer (PCG 20, 93%)
Tomb Raider (PCG 38, 93%)
TIE Fighter (PCG 9, 94%)
Dark Forces (PCG 16, 80%)
Quake (PCG 35, 95%)
Syndicate Wars (PCG 35, 92%)
NASCAR Racing 2 (PCG 39, 87%)
Terra Nova (PCG 29, 91%)
The Settlers 2 (PCG 31, 89%)
Doom II (PCG 11, 95%)
MechWarrior 2 (PCG 21, 92%)
Lords Of The Realm II (PCG 38, 79%)
Warcraft 2 (PCG 27, 92%)
Afterlife (PCG 30, 84%)
Caesar 2 (PCG 25, 86%)
Descent 2 (PCG 29, 87%)
Heretic (PCG29, 86%)
Hexen (PCG 24, 93%)
FIFA 97 (PCG 37, 76%)
Terminator: Future Shock (PCG 26, 92%)
Strife (PCG 35, 82%)
Amok (PCG 39, 54%)
Swiv3D (PCG 36, 86%)
Marathon 2 (N/A)
Crusader: No Regret (PCG 35, 85%)
Into The Shadows (N/A)
Tempest 2000 (PCG 26, 92%)
Super Stardust 96 (PCG 29, 90%)
Seek And Destroy (N/A)
Fire Fight (PCG 32, 76%)
Fire Fight Grafix Update (N/A)
Manic Karts (PCG 26, 85%)
Rally Challenge (N/A)
IndyCar Racing 2 (PCG 26, 87%)
Monster Truck Madness (PCG 36, 89%)
Road Rash (PCG 37, 73%)
Speed Haste (PCG 28, 69%)
Steel Panthers 2 (PCG 24, 84%)
Battleground Ardennes (PCG 27, 83%)
FX Fighter Turbo (PCG 20, 92%)
Battle Arena Toshinden (PCG 33, 72%)
Bug (PCG 37, 79%)
Tyrian 2 (N/A)
Abuse 2 (N/A)
The Lion King (PCG 15, 71%)
Aladdin (PCG 15, 75%)
Screamer (PCG 24, 90%)
Gene Wars (PCG 25, 84%)
Virtual Snooker (PCG 30, 85%)
PGA Euro Tour (PCG 29, 91%)





WIN A PRINTER!

You may have noticed the sinister appearance of an advert on our CD this month. It is, however, intimately connected with the chance to win one of two flashy Epson Stylus Colour 500 printers. All you have to do is watch the advert, complete the following slogan and send the answer, marked Epson Compo, to Ben Rodd at the usual address.

"There's no..."

CD GAMER SPECIAL 1,000+ level feast

Our collection of the best 1,000 *Quake, Duke Nukem 3D, Doom, Doom II, Hexen* and *Descent* levels should be enough to keep you going for months. Here's how to get them all going

Doom and Doom II levels

To play one of the custom levels on the CD simply install it to your *Doom* or *Doom II* directory by selecting the relevant file from the CD GAMER menu. Once it's copied in you should leave the menu and change to the directory where *Doom* is located. Now type the following command to start the game using this new level:

DOOM -FILE TEST.WAD if you are playing *Doom*
or DOOM2 -FILE TEST.WAD if you are playing *Doom II*.

If you want to see which levels are available at any time type dir *.wad /p when in the directory. Please note that these levels will only work with the registered versions of *Doom* and *Doom II*.

Quake levels

1) Create a new directory called MAPS within the QUAKE\ID1 directory by typing 'md c:\quake\id1\maps'.
2) Load the CD GAMER DOS menu and unzip the level files to this directory.
3) Start *Quake* and select the console. Type in MAP followed by the name of the new level, for example: MAP KEEP (to load a new file called KEEP.BSP).

Duke Nukem 3D levels

Use the GAMER DOS menu to unzip the required levels to the directory on your hard disk where the full version of *Duke Nukem 3D* is installed. Now run the SETUP program in this directory and select the relevant level from the add user level option.

Descent and Hexen levels

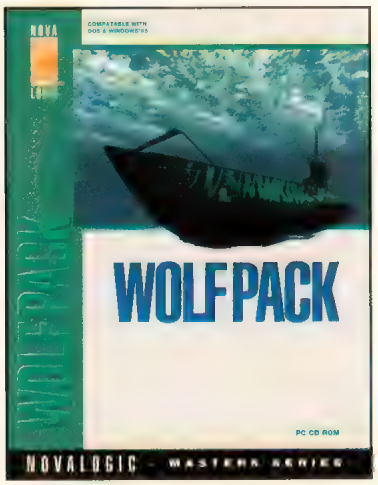
For *Descent* and *Hexen* levels please consult the README files supplied with the new levels and the manual issued with the retail versions of these games, for detailed information on how to use them.

Unfortunately...

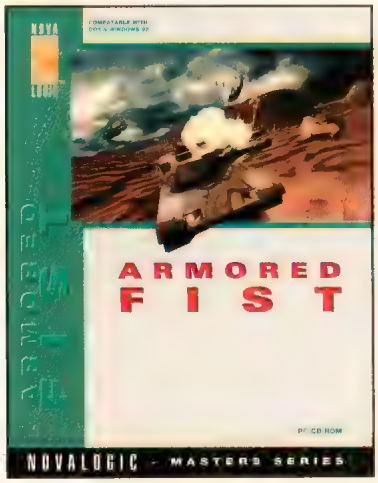
This vast collection of games occupied somewhat more space than we'd anticipated, so the patches that are mentioned are in fact stored on the regular CD GAMER. Also, you may notice that *Battleground Gettysburg* appears on the menu but is not in fact on the disk. This occurred due to 11th hour technical problems

WAR DOESN'T HAVE TO BE EXPENSIVE

...PRICE MANOEUVRES REPORTED AT RETAIL...
...CAPTURE 2 VERY DIFFERENT WARS BOTH AT VERY LOW PRICES...



wolfpack™



armored fist™

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The good news is, you've just inherited an island resort from your dead uncle.
The bad news is, your uncle was one seriously twisted guy.

GT INTERACTIVE, IN CONJUNCTION WITH TRIBECA INTERACTIVE, PRESENT 9 EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ROBERT DE NIRO AND JANE ROSENTHAL
CHARACTER VOICES: CHER AS ISADORA, CHRISTOPHER REEVE AS THURSTON LAST, JAMES BELUSHI AS SALTY, AND STEVEN TYLER AND JOE PERRY OF AEROSMITH AS THE TWINS. PRODUCED BY BUZZ HAYS AND PETER ROSENTHAL. ART DIRECTION BY MARK RYDEN

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SCOOP! Your first look at...

X-CAR: EXPERIM

Quality smashes are an essential feature of any racing game, so here's a big picture of one to judge by. Bethesda are particularly chuffed with their smoke particle effects.

In the finest racing traditions, each of the concept tracks is themed. For instance, you can race on the sunny side on the coastal track, twist and turn on the mountain track and abuse the one way system in Seattle.

ENTAL RACING

In *X-Car* you can push envelopes to the limit and drive some next-gen demon racers as well.

By MARK DONALD

PC RACING GAMES ARE AS COMMON AS muck at the moment. Last issue there was *Daytona* and *Power F1* and if you care to flick through this month's PC GAMER, picking a page at random, there's a good chance you'll alight upon *NASCAR 2* or *Sega Rally* or *Destruction Derby* or one of the others bumper to bumper between the covers. Surely driving game gridlock is imminent? And yet Bethesda seem to have found their own road, bypassing the congestion by taking the concept-car cool of *Need For Speed*, welding it to the sim-rigour of *GP2* and giving it all a special blueprint respray job.

As Brent Erickson, *X-Car*'chief programmer, would have it, "It's a racing sim featuring near-future, advanced prototype supercars inspired by concept cars like the McClaren GT and the Ford DB series."

However, whereas your usual runaround sims are constrained by the reality of busy bodies like FISA banning all the really exciting innovations in the name of safety, *X-Car's* is utterly uninhibited by the killjoys. X is for experimental you see.

Complete control

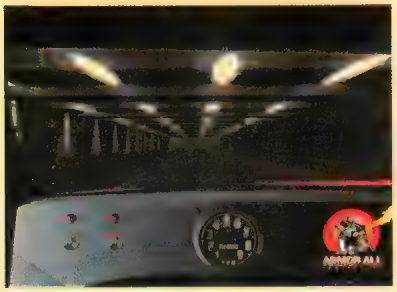
Brent warms to this theme: "The underlying concept of the game was to develop an open-ended approach that enabled players to control every aspect of their car without being limited by the class restrictions of, say, Indycars. In *X-Car* you can modify pretty much anything you want using the latest hi-tech components."

Selecting from a garage of 15 concept cars that make the Batmobile look like a Model T Ford, you begin with a default chassis and then customise it with all the bits and bobs Bethesda have culled from drawing boards around the world. Brent elaborates: "There are five different engines to choose from. You can change the fuel types using gasoline or methanol, change the gearing, adjust the brakes, spring rates, tyres, roll bars, wing angles and size, and then go try it out."

"In *X-Car* you can modify pretty much anything you want using the latest hi-tech components." – Brent Erickson, chief programmer

Trying it out means thrashing your special issue motor about four test tracks, each designed to push the car to its theoretical limits. Analyse how much G-Force you can generate on the skid pad, examine how nippy it is on the cone populated handling track, discover just how much you've got under the bonnet with acceleration and braking tests on the ¼ mile runway, before ironing out your drag factor by piling into a wall at 300mph on the high-speed oval.

Tinkerers will be kept happy for months, as *X-Car* features telemetry data – onboard computers track the car's performance during tests and the logged data can then be used in further bouts of fiddling with components as you refine and modify your supercar into some kind of space-race spin-off launch vehicle.



You'll be lucky to stay on the track with all the rubber necking you'll be doing at *X-Car*'s gorgeous scenery.

Realistic handling

Much of the game's scope for testing and modification is aimed at hardcore automotive junkies who like nothing more than an evening softening their rear dampers in *GP2*. For them, Bethesda have delayed the game's release by another two months to ensure that the real physics model provides some of the most realistic handling yet seen on the PC. Poor Brent has been spending his time producing a model so complicated that it "simulates temperature and altitude when it calculates engine output; the tyre model is based on 15 coefficients simulating the grip curve of the tyre". Wow. "You can do anything you can in real life. If you want to flip the car 180 degrees by driving backwards, hitting the brake and spinning the vehicle, you can."

Thankfully, though, for those more interested in ex-cars than *X-Car*, there are plenty of arcade options and a more tolerant physics model which should have you writing off flash automobiles in no time at all. The racing itself includes all the traditional practice and qualifying sessions and a world championship set over ten courses – five faithful reproductions of US Grand-Prix-style circuits and five concept tracks designed to show off the X^{n}gine's 3D prowess. Noticeably impressive is the particularly twisted Seattle urban jungle course flanked by looming skyscrapers.

Bethesda's top-notch X^{n}gine is also responsible for the game's other graphical flourishes. Brent enthusiastically describes the crashes: "The model of the car deforms, the polygon cars' frames warp, debris scatters everywhere, there's smoke and sparks." Weather conditions such as rain and fog will also come into play, although unfortunately the planned night driving had to be dropped due to speed considerations. Despite this, Brent reckons they've got it all ticking over at 15fps in full detail VGA on a 16Mb 486/66, no less, which would be pretty amazing.

As we've come to expect, there are all the usual network and video crash compilation options, but most excitingly of all is the promise that the game's technology will continue to advance, as Bethesda are planning to put new cars and components on the Net so that *X-Car* engineers need never stand still. Already being designed are some slightly more fictional future cars, although jet and hover propulsion have been firmly ruled out. Boo. PCG

WHY THE OTHERS WILL EAT *X-CAR'S* DUST

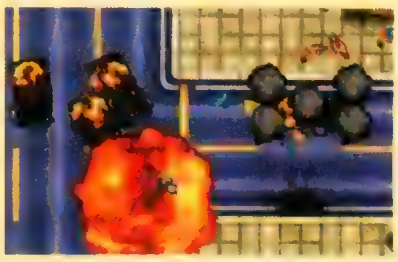
- **You get to drive next-generation supercars at speeds of near 300mph.**
- **And write them off in spectacular pile-ups.**
- **Then you can build your own.**
- **The game will evolve as more cars and custom components will be downloadable from Bethesda's Web site.**

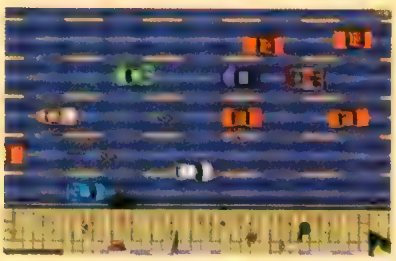
Developer	Bethesda	How complete	80%
UK Publisher	Virgin	Release date	March

SCOOP! Your first look at...

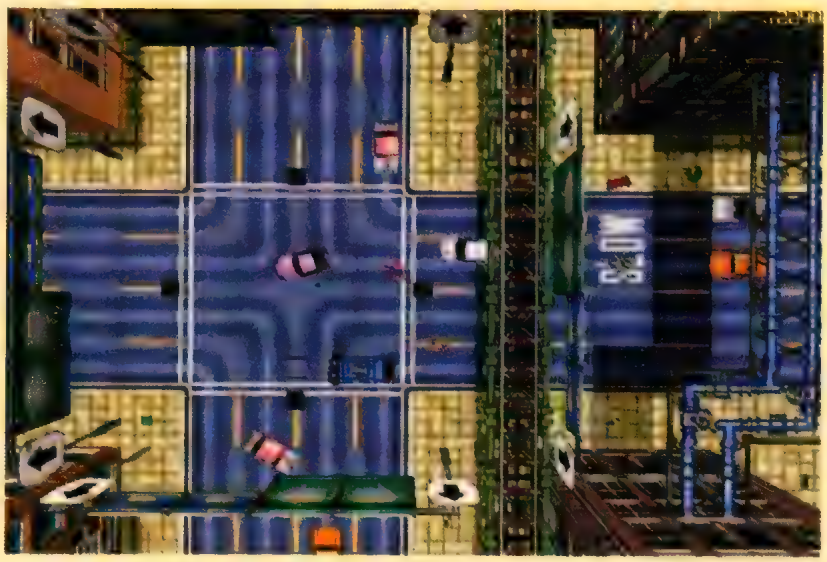
GRAND THE

A typical New York solution to congestion during rush hour. Each city has its own unique inhabitants, so in New York you're likely to attract the attention of crazed yellow taxi drivers and in San Francisco the Uzi-toting Triad gangs.





Graphically, it reminds us of the road mats and matchbox cars of our youth, but with more blood.



FT AUTO

Car crime – together we'll jack it. Embark on a career of carnage with DMA. By MARK DONALD

A COMMON REVIEWER'S LAMENT IS THE obstinate refusal of driving games to recognise a condition that they induce in us all. Namely an irrepressible craving to just veer off into the roadside spectators and plough through them like Pacman popping pills. Thankfully, one company is preparing to remedy this intolerable situation, and who better than the creators of *Lemmings*, DMA design, to deal with the subject of hapless road kills? *Grand Theft Auto* is, for want of a better term, a vroom-'em-up, and the one-ton projectile of steel you're driving at 60mph is your weapon.

You start off as a junior league joyrider, a getaway-with-it driver who's declared car war on the cities of New York, San Francisco and Miami and is intent on screaming round racking up pinball-like scores by bumping off people and being illegal in any way possible. Unsurprisingly, the action takes place from a police chopper's eye view as *GTA* encourages the sort of reckless road use that makes Police Stop! look like a public health and safety film.

As Brian Baglo, DMA's chief writer and software designer, neutrally notes, "Any car you can stop you can steal. And you can stop any car in the city if you know what you're doing. Say you're at the scene of a crime and the Police show up, if you're quick enough, you can be off with their squad car before they know what's happened."

Variety of vehicles

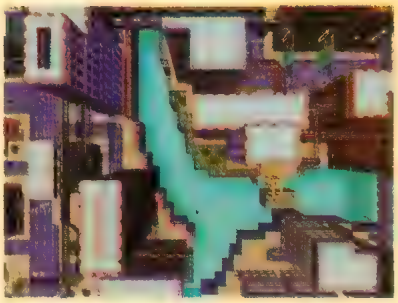
There are over two dozen types of hijackable vehicle in the game including lorries, motorcycles, 'mind that child' ice cream vans, buses, ambulances and erm, subway trains. Baglo promises that they'll all have their own handling characteristics, although the train steers like a cow until you get used to it.

As the pragmatic Baglo muses, "It's a sad reflection on mankind but people want to squash things." So in *GTA* you have the freedom of the city, until you're caught. Freeways, alleyways, parks, docks, shopping malls, pavements and even, good grief, roads are mountable and rideable as you practise wheel-spins in a crowded picnic area. And although DMA by no means condone such behaviour, they're including a weighted scoring system along the lines of 100pts per pedestrian, 1,000pts per policeman and 5,000pts for a small, yappy dog.

But while you're weaving about the streets without due care and attention, the law begins to take an increasingly dim view of your callous disregard for the mirror, signal and manoeuvre etiquette. Police response is a crucial factor in *GTA*, as model citizen Baglo cautions, "The police react in a kind of realistic manner. In New York if you tap a few cars they won't start a massive manhunt over it, but if you start sending pedestrians off to the morgue with startling regularity, then they'll start to take a bit of interest. Whereas in Miami, if you so much as touch one little granny's Cadillac, then you're going to have SWAT teams after you."

What could make *GTA* truly great, just in case you're worried about the limitations of a lengthy delinquent game of hit-and-run skittles, are *DMA*'s well-advanced plans for living cities and a structured series of missions and goals. As you ride your one-man crime wave the ordinary citizens of the metropolis go about their daily businesses. When, not if, you clip somebody, an ambulance will come and mop them up. Abandon a burning car and the fire brigade arrives to put it out and call a tow truck to remove it. Queues form by cinemas, and pro-lifers demonstrate outside hospitals in provocative, point packed herds...

As Baglo warns, "You're not going to believe the missions when you see them, they start off quite gently but things get fairly sick, fairly fast." One of the first tasks when you're playing the game proper is trying to gain acceptance into a crime family. You start by carrying out simple delivery errands, but prove your worth and your responsibilities will rise with you until someone utters the Godfather-like line, "The local district attorney is being uncooperative, rub him out."



The vertigo-inducing perspective in 24bit colour. That's 16 million colours, more than the human eye can see.

Living cities

"We're not trying to limit you to a linear style of game on wheels," Baglo explains. "We let you explore the entire city and the missions are there if you want them. How you complete the jobs is entirely up to you. If you want to stop at the lights with a car full of crack and rocket launchers, and not drive on the pavement if you see a party of nuns, that's fine. We're not telling you to break the law, we're just telling you to exercise your options."

Of course as your career progresses, police involvement becomes, aah, more regular, which is where the living city idea really comes in. "All the bits and pieces that the criminal might need are present somewhere in the city and it's just up to you to find them and put them to use without getting caught," says Baglo.

If you're public enemy No. 1 in a red Mondeo, then pop into your friendly respray shop and, hey presto!, you're a model citizen in a green Mondeo. If you reckon that a car bomb would be just the job for the next mission, then find the right garage mechanic and they might be able to fix you up.

Grand Theft Auto is one of those games which sounds like, no matter what, it's going to be pure fun. It offers more special little touches than a maternal octopus and contains so many extras not mentioned here that we'll probably just have to do another feature on it soon. PCG

"You're not going to believe the missions, they start off quite gently but things get fairly sick, fairly fast." – Brian Baglo, chief writer

WHY *GTA* WILL CARVE UP THE REST

- **You get to mow people down in a motor and de-rail subway trains.**
- **The depth at which you want to play it is entirely up to you.**
- **It's got real-time 24bit colour.**
- **There are 200 mob jobs to carry out as your career progresses.**
- **Each city has its own unique features. San Francisco has China Town, for example.**

Developer	DMA	How complete	92%
UK Publisher	BMG	Release date	February/March

SCOOP! Your first look at...

DIE HARD

The car chase section is the final part of *Die Hard Trilogy*. You have to race through the streets of New York deactivating bombs and mowing down pedestrians.

The basement of the Nakatomi Plaza. Run around collecting bigger and bigger guns and shooting anyone with a threatening expression.

TRILOGY

Probe have already proved their skill on the consoles, but what does the PC hold in store for these relative newcomers? By JAMES FLYNN

(Right) The *Virtua Cop*-style second instalment is the most dramatic. For such a simple concept it manages to add quite a bit of depth.

FILM LICENCES ARE MORE OFTEN THAN not poorly timed cash-ins which offer little reward to the games player. This is not the case with *Die Hard Trilogy*. Probe, through licence owners Fox and their distributors Electronic Arts, have been sitting on a wealth of encouraging PlayStation review scores for six months now. And following warm on its heals for Christmas is the PC version.

Initially this looks like just the sort of game that you wouldn't really expect to find on the PC. Its pure arcade action is about as far removed from the machine's traditional fayre of adventures and strategy games as you could get. *Die Hard Trilogy* is based on the three films and is essentially three separate games themed around the central topic of each film. It's an ambitious goal for any developer to set themselves, but in this case looks as if it could work out better than most.

Three in one

The first episode, set in the Nakatomi Plaza, sees you in a 3D world fighting your way up the skyscraper that played host to the best of the trilogy. The game itself plays slightly like the *Crusader* titles, but it looks much more similar to something that would emerge from Bullfrog. The smooth 3D engine draws in around you in a sphere and the result – while unusual – affords a much greater view through walls than normal.

Episode two (Die Hard 2: Die Harder) swaps the third-person, over-the-shoulder view seen in the first episode for a more direct but simpler first-person shooter-style in the same vein as *Virtua Cop*. Starting off outside the airport your cab pulls in, you hop out and it's death from there on in. The target is a simple crosshair, but there's a wide variety of weapons of various power that may be wheeled into action, including a devastating rocket launcher. Sweeping through the terminal blowing away terrorists and avoiding hostages feels great (although shooting the hostages as well is even better).

The final instalment uses the incredible taxi chase through New York, as seen in Die Hard With A Vengeance, as a basis for a frantic bomb disposal mission. You have one taxi and have to locate and destroy bombs scattered around the city. Two radar indicators serve as your guide, and because the whole area is block based it makes the navigational task a lot simpler. More exploding cars, bouncing pedestrians and gunfire are all included in this section, which in the version we played was easily the least complete.

Hidden depths

Throughout the game all the scenery is interactive. Shooting a car in the first episode causes explosions that affect the surroundings, and in the second, various scenery objects can be shot for power-ups, new weapons health and the like. Monitors on the walls can be shot down to crush people, and ceilings cave in for similar effect. The placing of these is particularly clever in many instances, making the game more than just an unsubtle blast fest.

The game engine Probe have managed to construct for *Die Hard Trilogy* bodes well for the future of their PC development. However, it's the imagination that the team has displayed in not going for the safe option that is an even more encouraging sign. The London company who have been responsible for some of the biggest console hits and ports of the past few years are moving onto the PC full time during the next year. We'll bring you a fuller report on their activities in due course. PCG

"Its pure arcade action is about as far removed from the PC's traditional fayre of adventures and strategy games as you could get."

WHY *DIE HARD TRILOGY* SHOULD BE A BLAST

- **It's three games in one – two different shooters and a driving game.**
- **The variety should appeal more to PC owners than usual console games.**
- **Interactive scenery adds a tactical element to the proceedings.**
- **Probe have proven themselves as top developers many times before.**
- **Lobbing grenades at people causes amusing (but not for them) splattering effects.**

Developer	Probe	How complete	95%
UK Publisher	Electronic Arts	Release date	January

THIS MONTH

You'll no doubt have thumbed the 1997 preview section to oblivion by now and will find that Eyewitness falls firmly in its shadow this month. *Oddworld* still makes its presence felt, though, stunning us with its creative vision. *Flying Corps* continues its slow journey to release, another *Magic: The Gathering* game, this time from Acclaim, is announced, and there's *Twigger* – a Russian conundrum that you just have to play. Finally, in a slight departure from normal service, we take a quick look at Yaroze, the black PlayStation.

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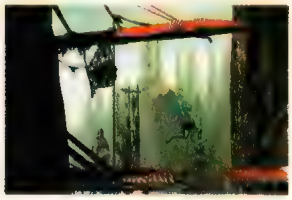
Enter an o

Could this possibly be – aargh! No! – the future of videogaming? By STEVE FARAGHER

THERE'S A KIND OF HOLY grail amongst hard-core computer gamers, an experience that we're all desperate to try because we've heard so much about it. So whenever computer games journalists are forced to travel to the west coast of America to look at a game, there's always a clamour for a trip to Universal Studios theme park in Los Angeles, and a go on the Back To The Future ride. Okay, it's not strictly a game, but the Back To The Future ride is a brain-shorting, exhilarating experience. And the reason that we all love it so much is that one day we hope computer games will be that exciting.



That's Abe there, jumping around in search of his destiny.

So when news came to us in the PCG office that the project manager of that ride, Sherry McKenna, and long-time partner Lorne Lanning, had turned their backs on years of being at the forefront of Hollywood computer technology to create – you guessed it – a PC game, we were naturally very interested.

Oddworld: Epic 1 – Abe's Odyssey, to give the game its full title, looks set to break the mould of PC games. What will set it apart from the others is that Sherry and Lorne are trying to create a living, breathing 'world' behind the computer screen.

This first game, in the planned series of five, focuses on the adventures of Abe, a peculiar being who you can see dotted around these pages, and his revenge on the evil Sligs who have kept his race in slavery. To exact his revenge he travels to three temples to learn their secrets, and finally returns to the meat-processing plant from where he escaped at the beginning of the game and kills all the Sligs. So far, so good.

The game has a sort of *Flashback* feel to it, being at its heart a platformer. But it's important to understand that this mechanic is secondary to the rest of the game, in fact it's quite likely that the other games in the quintet will use different formats to get the all-important story across.

What makes *Oddworld* so special is the degree of interaction with the other characters in the game. You can talk to them all, obviously, but they'll also respond to your emotional state, by reading between the lines of what you're saying. And they're smart too. Shoot a gun without a silencer and it's likely that someone will come to investigate. Follow a smart creature around and you could find yourself walking into an ambush. And these reactions are not part of the

dd world

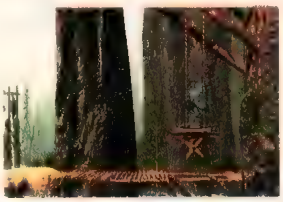
plot, they're spontaneous reactions to what you're doing. You can also order friendly creatures to do things for you, like 'wait here'.

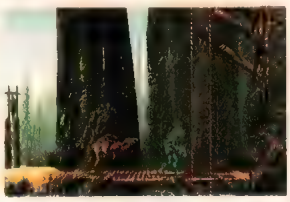
The puzzle solving is a bit special too. As well as the usual exploration elements of the game, where you just have to find things and manage to jump over chasms and so forth, there are also Abe's special abilities. For a start, he learns from each of the three temples he visits how to morph himself into another creature. But even more interesting than that is his ability to 'possess' the other characters in the game, which he often has to do to get past guards and visit places he could otherwise never get to.

But most impressive of all, could be the way that the game moves seamlessly from one scene to another and introduces bits of FMV without it ever breaking up the action, giving you a much more involved feel when you're playing. It sounds like *Heart Of Darkness'* aim all those years ago. To this end you'll also notice that there are no health bars or pop-up inventories, or any of the other hallmarks of this kind of game.

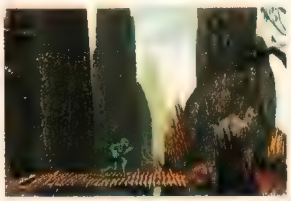
Providing they succeed in tying all these elements together into a believable whole, *Oddworld* could definitely usher in a new era of storytelling games on the PC.

● *Oddworld: Epic 1 - Abe's Odyssey* will be released in August 1997.

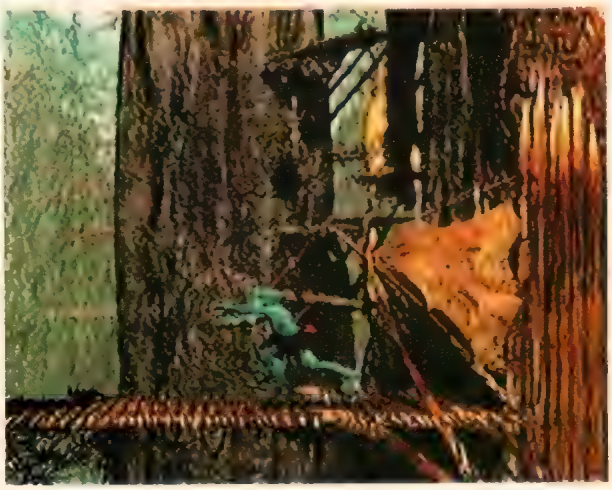




As you can probably tell, there's quite a green theme to this game.



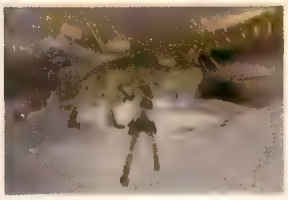
The only other green hero I can recall is The Incredible Hulk. But he's bigger.



Righteous

As Steve played his way through the superlative *Tomb Raider*, James decided that it was a game he'd like to play, but he'd wait for the 3Dfx version to appear. His wait is over. We got hold of a beta patch from the official *Tomb Raider* Web site (http://www.tombraider.com) and are, at the risk of being risqué, blown away by it. So fast, so detailed, so good. Get yourself *Tomb Raider*, a fast PC and the Righteous 3D.

And as if to commemorate this occasion, Eidos have just announced that *Tomb Raider* has shipped one million copies worldwide. Thoroughly deserved success, we think.



Quake add-on

Did you know that there's going to be two official *Quake* add-on packs available in early 1997? And did you also know that Activision are the ones with the rights to publish them and not *Quake*'s publisher GT? If you didn't, then you won't be aware that the packs haven't been developed by Id, but by Hipnotic and Rogue. Hipnotic's offering contains 15 levels over three episodes, plus a single deathmatch area.

Flashpoint situation

EA's Jane's *AH-64D Longbow* has an add-on disk! Hoorah! *Flashpoint Korea*, as it has been deemed to be called, is based not in Droitwich but Korea, where there is currently a bit of a flashpoint situation. It's available any day, it'll cost about £20 and that's all we know.

Real-time Ma

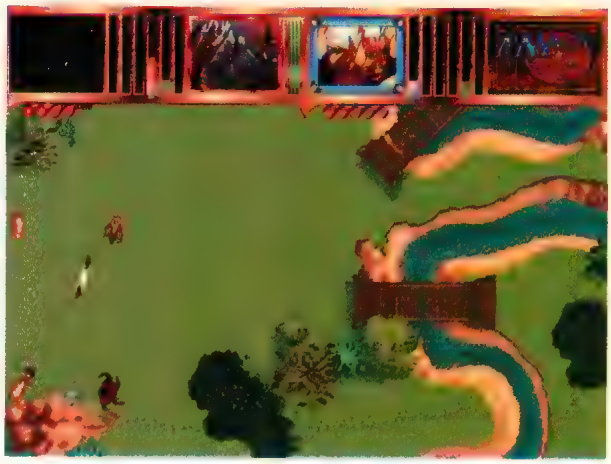
The most popular card game ever is rapidly becoming the most popular PC licence ever.

By STEVE FARAGHER

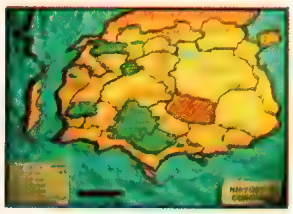
YOU CAN'T HAVE MISSED the hype, you probably know all about the original card game which has sold over a billion cards in the three years it's been available, and you almost certainly saw our big review of MicroProse's version of it (PCG 35, 91%). Now Acclaim are also having a go at transferring the games phenomenon of the '90s on to your PC, much to the disappointment of MicroProse, who have had to delay the release of their version of it. In fact, legal disputes over the different versions are what's caused some of the delay to MicroProse's game, as we reported in Eyewitness last month.

Magic: The Gathering is a card game of duelling wizards who cast spells at each other. Spells which summon monsters to attack their opponent, or harness the powers of the elements to launch lightning bolts and fireballs. And whereas MicroProse's version of the game was designed to faithfully recreate the card game on your PC (by actually representing the game as you might see it laid out on a table), Acclaim's takes a different route.

In ***Magic: The Gathering – Battlemage***, the cards are replaced by an on-screen representation of each duel, so that you and your opponent, as well as the monsters you summon and the spells you cast, are represented by little animated icons. This way, your trolls lumber across the screen before thumping your opponent and your fireball explodes with a percussive thump on top of whoever you aimed it at. And the terrain displayed will have an effect too, with monsters having to walk around mountains, for example, while



The wee blobs on the left are a collection of monsters that have been summoned to fight in the duel. As you can see, terrain plays a big part in the battles.



(Above) Corondor is a richly detailed fantasy world, if a bit corny.
(Left) You learn to tell your spells apart by the art that represents them.

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those that can fly will just go straight over. The biggest difference to the card game version, though, is that Acclaim's game is in real time instead of the turn-based sequence of the original.

There's a campaign mode too, where you battle against five other wizards for control of the world of Corondor, in a sort of Risk-like way. And there's the now obligatory network play.

First impressions are that Acclaim are on to something here – they're essentially offering you all the strategy and fun of the original card game, while jazzing it up a bit for the PC. Our only regret so far is that the 'thee' and 'thou' quotient in all the on-screen text might be a bit too high for even our well-accustomed eyes. Sirrah.

● *Magic: The Gathering – Battlemage* is due out from Acclaim in March.

Star-crossed lovers

A development that brings the PC and the PlayStation together? Sounds unlikely. By STEVE FARAGHER

There's a strange word on the lips of everybody involved in the computer gaming industry at the moment: Yaroze. You hear it whispered in boardrooms and shouted down the pub. It's a Japanese expression of encouragement, apparently, roughly translating to 'let's do it!' and the reason that it's being said so often is not that it's caught on as a buzz phrase among trendy young executives tired of 'ciao', but rather that it is the name of a new games development system for the Sony PlayStation.

Sony PlayStation? Yes. But the reason that you're reading about it here is that this system uses the PC as the actual developer, with your software then being downloaded via a serial cable to the PlayStation.

It's going to work like this. You pay £600 for a special black PlayStation with a memory card and two controllers, the development software for your PC, a copy of Netscape 2.02 and a month's free Web access. And then you start developing games, using the provided C compiler, and logging on to Sony's special Yaroze Web site, where you'll be able to show off your game, talk to other developers, swap hints and tips, download libraries and forge alliances.

And the reason that everybody's talking so excitedly about Yaroze is that it could revive the golden days of computer game development, when people developed games for the fun of it, and not because of commercial pressure.

Yaroze will need a 486/66 PC with 4Mb RAM to run and will become available in early 1997. If you'd like more details you can write to: YAROZE Application, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, Waverley House, 7-12 Noel Street, London, W1 4HH, telephone (0171) 447 1616, fax (0171) 390 4324, E-Mail ps_yaroze@interactive.sony.com or visit Sony's Web site at http://www.scee.sony.co.uk/.

WANT A JOB?

Are you interested in writing for PC GAMER? Reckon you've got the insight, the knowledge of PC games and the skill to entertain? If so, we'd like to hear from you. We currently have a full-time vacancy as well as opportunities for some part-time freelance work. Drop us a line at 'I Could Do That', PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Soon.

Where are they now?

The Old Boys Release Date club still has some founder members, but surely even they are beginning to worry about seeing the light of day before too long.

Deathtrap Dungeon (Eidos)	March
Diablo (Blizzard)	January
Dungeon Keeper (Bullfrog)	March
Ecstatica 2 (Psygnosis)	February
Flying Corps (Rowan)	Out now
Guts 'n' Garters (Ocean)	February
Hexen 2 (Raven)	April
Imperium Galactica (GT)	January
Into The Shadows (Scavenger)	February
Jedi Knights (LucasArts)	April
LBA2 (EA)	February
Magic: The Gathering (MicroProse)	February
MDK (Interplay)	January 15th
Prey (3D Realms)	May
Rebellion (LucasArts)	March
Starcraft (Blizzard)	June
Sub Culture (Criterion)	March
TFX3: F-22 (DID)	March
Unreal (Epic)	March
X-COM: Apocalypse (MicroProse)	March
X-Wing vs TIE Fighter (LucasArts)	End January

ORDER SIGNS

180

Coming in January from

http://www.3do.com

Celestial tif

GT's *Mortal Kombat* follow-up improves 3D fighting games graphics, but still retires during the first round on the story line front.

By STEVE OWEN

PRESS START
86
PAGAN
Never ever drink pure alcohol while smoking, otherwise you'll never get a second date with that leather girl.

NO-ONE REALLY CARES about the background to *Mortal Kombat*, or even *Quake* for that matter, but without question, the technical geniuses behind such games insist on coming up with some ludicrous tissue-thin plot to explain why you are currently hitting people very hard or shooting them with large rockets and automatic weapons that fire nails.

War Gods, Midway's *Mortal Kombat* follow-up, is, which may not surprise you, no exception. Get a load of this one:

Apparently billions of years ago some creature crash-landed into a primeval Earth while transporting some magical Ore. Eight characters throughout history came into contact with this Ore, transmutating into, conveniently, super-evolved warriors. For instance, ancient manuscripts revealed the location of some Ore to a mistress of the black arts, known as Pagan. Warhead, on the other hand, was an operative sent to investigate an experiment combining Ore and nuclear weapons, but an explosion got him an Oring comeuppance. Anubis, a grave robber nosing around in the Valley of the Kings, was killed by the Ore, but his soul remained forever cursed.

And there's more. In the future, a cyborg known as CY-5 is implanted with Ore by some scientists. Of course, the Ore takes him over, and the scientists forever sleep with the fishies. Maximus, though,

Haven help us

Interactive Magic have a battery of new releases pointing our way, including *Fallen Haven*.

Alien invaders attack an unprepared human colony due to tragic misinterpretation of the words 'do not touch', giving rise to much turn-based resource management and strategic combat. That could be the name of the game but it doesn't exactly trip off the tongue, so IM have plumped for the punchier *Fallen Haven* instead. Our latest brain-sucking adversaries are the Taurans, who've stuck their flag into the planet of New Haven when we were patently there first.

So the stage is set for you to reconquer the planet across a series of enormous scenarios or, if you're feeling contrary, to fight futile Earthling resistance as the aliens.

But IM aren't just relying upon big to be beautiful with *Fallen Haven*, as when we delved into its vastness we found ourselves sampling a strategic onion: peeling off layers of resource management, research paths, special missions and military adventurism. From your initial toehold territory you must plan which neighbouring provinces are ripe for plunder and judge when your forces are strong enough to pull off the special missions – which add bonuses to the war effort like advanced technology blueprints. All the while you're strengthening the home front, throwing up isometric 3D mining installations, research labs, factories and barracks and once it's all simmering nicely, churning out Pentagon quantities of military equipment to leather ET with. And

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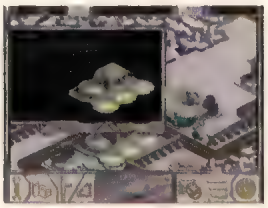
was a mighty gladiator, and once fought for his master over an Ore bet. Consumed with greed, he killed his masters and stole it for himself. Don't try that at home, kids.

Nearly there. Kabuki Jo isn't as interesting – he just found some one day. Ahau Kin knew the value of employee management, killing all his slaves one by one in attempting to retrieve some Ore from the bottom of a well. Never ask your men to do something you wouldn't do yourself, he thought, after successfully retrieving it himself. Voodoo, a witch doctor, was burnt to death and discarded into a swamp containing Ore. He's undead, now. A separate story tells of a kingdom that worshipped Ore, but was attacked by an army. A statue used to hide the Ore came to life as Tak, the kind of thing you find at village fetes. Nothing interesting ever happens to Vallah, who just hacked with a sword and became a Viking goddess, which is nice.

But where the story might sound pointless, if somewhat entertaining, it's the graphics and types of special moves that really win the hearts of you beat-'em-up fans. With a quick add up of the above, um, three, four, carry the one... that makes 740 different characters. No, ten, sorry. Naturally each character has the necessary special and fatality moves, such as Voodoo's Cyclone Claw, CY-5's Energy Sphere and Warhead's rather sulky sounding Exploding Stomp.

Although the full textured polygons look great in these shots, it's a sure bet that to re-create the arcade board's power using a single processor is going to challenge the skill of the programmers. However, if they can pull it off, it will be the first serious 3D challenger to the undisputed champ, *Virtua Fighter Remix*.

● GT's *War Gods* is due to make an appearance in late January.



Despite being in the middle of a war, there's no excuse for unkempt public parks.

there seems to be no shortage of hovertanks, buggies, ALVs, dropships, artillery and nuclear missiles to choose from.

As with all turn-based games, combat in *Fallen Haven* seeks to compensate for its lack of frenzied action with tactical tension, and it appears to have struck a good balance. Territories are densely terrained and bases bristling with defensive walls, anti-missile silos and gun towers, so clever pincer manoeuvres and the cunning deployment of forces are definitely called for. Thus far it all seems to be based on entirely safe ground and we very much hope it stays that way.

● *Fallen Haven* will be launched UK-wards in February.

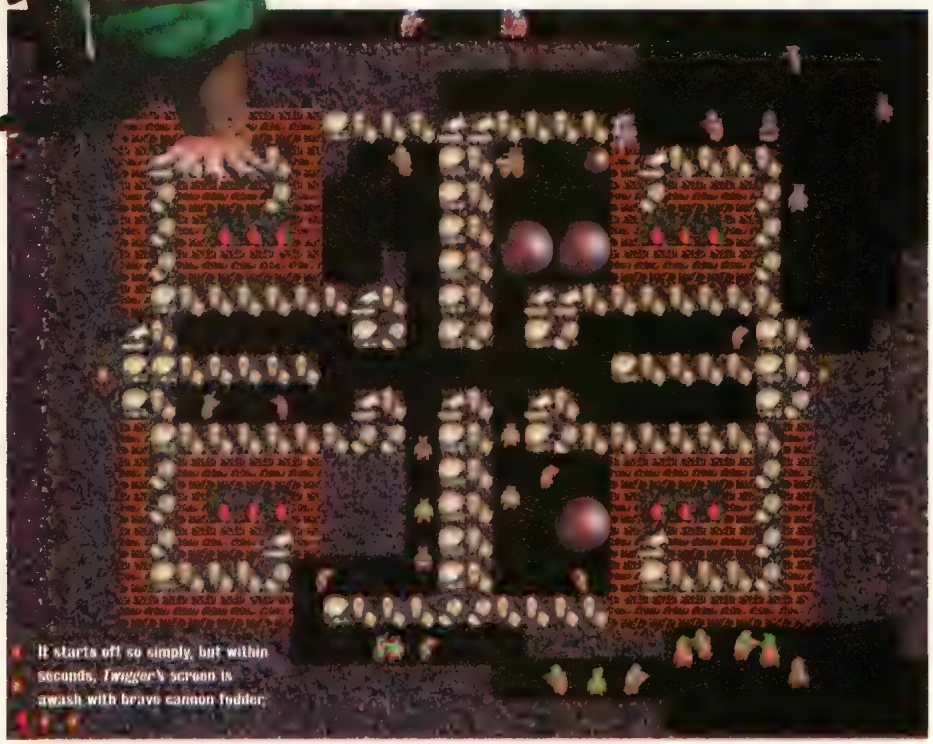
WARNING SIGNS

Casualties

Coming in January from

http://www.3do.com

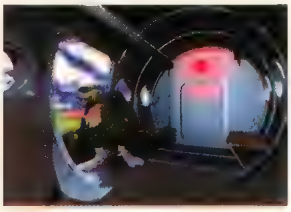
Twigger ha



If starts off so simply, but within seconds, *Twigger*'s screen is awash with brave cannon fodder.

The wonderful thing about *Twigger*, is *Twigger*'s a wonderful thing. By STEVE FARAGHER

EVERY SO OFTEN, AN EVENT happens in the PC GAMER office that makes it all worthwhile. We'll be sitting at our desks, numb with exhaustion, retinas replaying vivid flashbacks of the four hours of network *Quake* we've just been forced to subject ourselves to in the name of research, and the coffee will be congealing in mugs as we prepare for another late-night assault on the monster that PC GAMER has transformed itself into. And that's when it usually happens. A distraction that takes us away from the mundane necessities of piloting the UK's biggest PC games mag and into the realms of happiness.

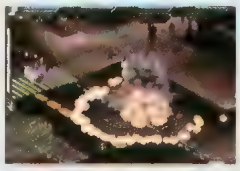


PC GAMER Recommended — Games we love that are in the shops now.

Tomb Raider
Eidos £40 (PCG 38, 93%)
Tomb Raider doesn't just look fantastic, it's been very cleverly designed and is so huge you need not fear an empty Christmas break. Having said that, we've just seen the 3Dfx enhanced version and it looks even more astounding.

Grand Prix 2
MicroProse £45 (PCG 27, 95%)
Power F1 and *NASCAR 2* have both had a worthy but ultimately futile attempt to bully *Grand Prix 2* from its position as haughty leader of racing games. Still an entertaining wheel spin after all these months.

C&C: Red Alert
Virgin £45 (PCG 37, 95%)
Red Alert is undoubtedly a fantastically fine game, both subtle and unsubtle in equal measure, and with an astounding multi-player option. You'll need Windows 95 to enjoy the SVGA version. Chew on this.



Syndicate Wars
Bullfrog/EA £40 (PCG 35, 92%)
A darkly satisfying puzzle strategy game, that has chosen not to cut out the fringe benefits of the original. With the ability to destroy buildings and wipe your team out with a nuclear grenade, this is everything we want.

Toonstruck
Virgin £45 (PCG 37, 90%)
Toonstruck, the multi-million dollar cartoon adventure starring Christopher Lloyd, is ideal if you like your adventures farcical, otherwise consider the equally fine *Broken Sword*, also from Virgin. Hours of head-scratching fun.

Quake
GT £45 (PCG 37, 95%)
Quake is regarded as the best multi-player game available. Sure we still have a go on *Warcraft 2* for old times sake and when we've got an entire evening to fill, but *Quake* is good old blasting fun.

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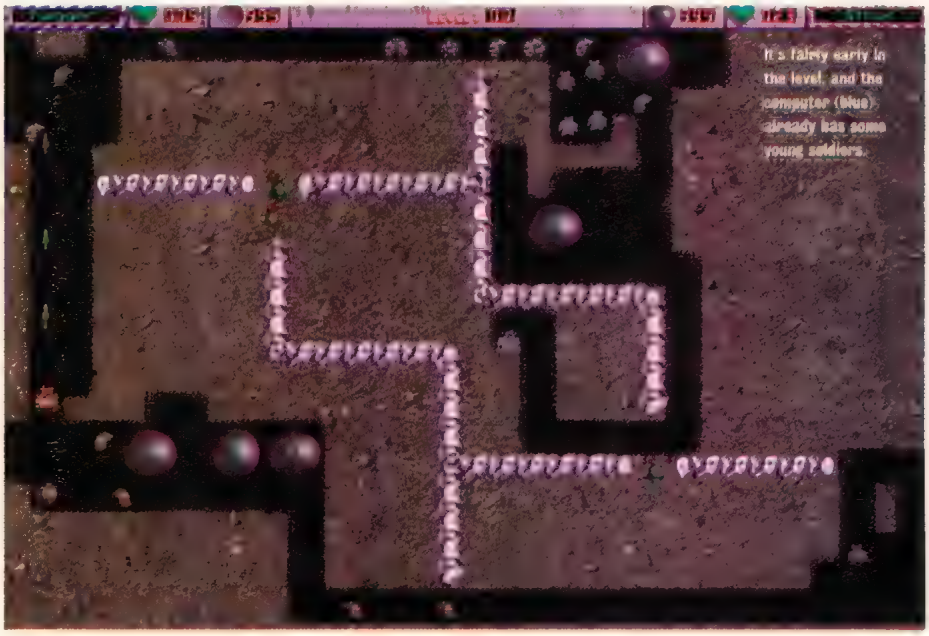


This month it came in the form of a letter from Russia with a CD-ROM and two magazines. "I wish you Merry Christmas and, as Russians used to say, robust Siberian health, Caucasian longevity!", began the letter from Eugene Lomko of Nikita Software, who was writing to tell us about his new game, ***Twigger***, and the scores of 100% it had achieved in the two Russian magazines he'd sent us. Bemused, we put a copy of the game in our office PC. And that's when we started laughing.

Not because *Twigger*'s rubbish, but because the introductory sequence showing a small mole being parachuted into the front line of a battle is the funniest thing we'd ever seen (on a PC game intro). The game itself is pretty fab, too, being very simple but great fun. It's a two-player game and you have to clear areas of the screen by moving through them in your tank. With a big enough area cleared, you can lay eggs which eventually hatch into mole soldiers. To get the energy to lay eggs you have to eat the carrots scattered around the screen (of course, eh?). All the time your opponent does the same thing. When your soldiers meet, they fight and one of you wins. All very simple and great fun.

● We hope that *Twigger* will find a distributor soon, then we'll be able to review it.

Violent acronym

Blatantly building a force on *Red Alert*'s borders, EA's forthcoming army game may be woefully underestimated. By STEVE OWEN

KKND, a now recognised and slightly more subtle shorthand for Kill, Krush 'N' Destroy, sneaked in the back door and installed itself on Jim's PC while we were all out for a sumptuous fry-up at a local hostelry. You see, *KKND* knew it had to approach warily, as *Red Alert* has now been installed on all the PCs connected to the office network for late evening multi-player warring, and we might have been a little unforgiving were we to spot an impostor infiltrating our ranks.

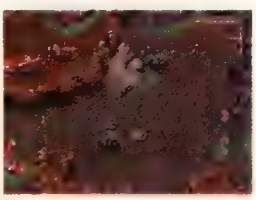
Fortunately, despite *KKND*'s obvious influences, there's no reason why it can't be an excellent game, and one deserving our attentions just as much as *Red Alert*.

Typically the game enjoys the usual two-player (one of which can be the PC) head-to-head fighting, with armies dictated by cunning choices in resource management. Increasingly bizarre vehicles and buildings becoming available as you progress through the 30 missions.

Storywise you can expect the standard post-apocalyptic nonsense. One side survived the holocaust by hiding and developing underground, while mutants continued to live life as only deformed monsters can in a radiated landscape.

A high-res graphics mode, network and modem support, and special multi-player scenarios suggest even further that it is aiming to get in the ring with its excitedly awaited counterpart. Perhaps EA need to try for a slightly alternative angle to compete with the huge hype and expectation surrounding Virgin's *Red Alert* (PCG 37, 95%). During a gentle heart-to-heart with the EA marketing team, suggestions were made that KKND may well appear at a lower price, say £30, to tempt people away from Mr Big. For this bit, time will be our story teller.

● *KKND*, which has been developed by Australia's Beam Software (http://www.beam.com.au) should be reviewed in the next issue.



HAND SIGNALS

I believe you are driving badly.

I believe you have the genitals of a small rodent.

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http://www.3do.com

STUDIO 3DO

THE LATEST ON...

FLYING CORPS

Rowan's superb World War I flight simulation is just days away from being in our hands. By talking about it, the game seems to be that much closer to arriving.

ROWAN ARE WITHOUT argument the one development company that have successfully produced consistently excellent flight simulations for the PC. *Dawn Patrol, Overlord* and *Navy Strike* look likely to be joined by ***Flying Corps*** in that famous league ladder known as The League Ladder of Very Good Flight Simulations Indeed.

Rowan's particular skill, it seems, it to produce frighteningly realistic simulations – both in terms of presentation and the flight model – while relying on missions and periods of history that require a fierce passion for one-on-one dogfighting, rather than the comparatively sterile long-range warfare typified by the likes of Novalogic's *F-22 Lightning 2*, where you shoot down enemy aircraft from 20 miles away. *Flying Corps* is early 20th Century stuff, where as a member of the Richthofen family (for instance) you'll be shooting down those damned Tommies with machines guns bolted to the outside of the cockpit as they fly within feet of you.

Rowan have gone to a lot of trouble to get each of the six planes to feel right, even though none of us knows what 'feels right' is. For instance, the Sopwith Camel had a tendency to hug to the right, and if you don't select the novice flight mode, you'll feel this. The landscapes look damned impressive, too, and are utterly realistic for the time, created as they were from spy photos of Europe during the Great War. Let's hope the effort was worthwhile, because uncompressed, Rowan's landscape data is ten gigabytes in size.

We last played *Flying Corps* at ECTS a couple of months ago, and even then it was so impressive that we can't wait to get our hands on the finished game. Annoyingly, we know how close it is, as it just missed this issue by a few days. It does at least mean that our exclusive review next month will reflect how much longer we'll have to play it.

● We'll be the first to review *Flying Corps* when it appears next month.

PC WORLD Charts

THE OFFICIAL PC GAMER TOP TWENTY

In conjunction with PC WORLD, the UK's leading PC retailer

Red Alert is looking unassailable at the top, and no doubt all right thinking PC gamers who didn't receive it in their Christmas stocking will be hurrying along to their nearest high street software outlet clutching a wad of game's tokens, embossed with the Queen's head, to rectify the situation. But what about our poor Lara sliding down the chart's greasy pole? You must save her.

Ⓤ Up Ⓓ Down ● Non-mover ✪ New entry ◤ Re-entry

Top 20 *CD-ROM*

1	●	Command & Conquer: Red Alert	Virgin
2	●	FIFA 97	Electronic Arts
3	Ⓤ	Flight Simulator for Windows 95	Microsoft
4	Ⓤ	Network Q Rally Championship	Europress
5	Ⓤ	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse
6	Ⓤ	Monopoly	Hasbro
7	Ⓓ	Tomb Raider	Eidos
8	Ⓤ	Discworld 2	Psygnosis
9	Ⓓ	Screamer 2	Virgin
10	Ⓓ	Championship Manager 96/97	Eidos
11	◤	Command & Conquer	Virgin
12	Ⓤ	Worms United	Ocean
13	●	Quake	GT
14	◤	Civilization 2	MicroProse
15	Ⓤ	Return Of Arcade	Microsoft
16	✪	Destruction Derby 2	Psygnosis
17	✪	Microsoft Golf 3.0	Microsoft
18	Ⓓ	Duke Nukem 3D	Eidos
19	✪	Alien Trilogy	Acclaim
20	Ⓓ	Syndicate Wars	Bullfrog

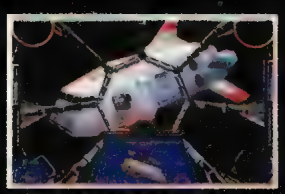
And as for the coming-soon games which over-heating gamers are besieging PC World for, well, they're much the same as last month – *Dungeon Keeper, Jedi Knight* and *X- Wing vs Tie Fighter* with excitement mounting for *Sega Rally* as well.

Your most *wanted*

Red Alert ascends to a better place this month, namely every hard drive in the country and the forces of LucasArts seize their chance to fill the power vacuum. *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* is your master now, with its henchman *Jedi Knight* sitting at its right hand. And with *Rebellion* lurking at the fringes of the chart we foresee a long period of domination by the powers of Star Wars. **Chris Trewin** of Cornwall had the presence of mind to fill in a Most Wanted coupon this month and just for that he'll receive a copy of *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter*, eventually.

To receive the same treatment, cast your votes for the games you're aching for, with: **My Most Wanted, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.**

1.	Ⓓ	X-Wing vs TIE Fighter	6.	Ⓤ	X-COM: Apocalypse
2.	Ⓓ	Jedi Knight	7.	Ⓤ	Prey
3.	●	Diablo	8.	✪	Monkey Island 3
4.	Ⓓ	Dungeon Keeper	9.	◤	Alien Trilogy
5.	✪	Unreal	10.	✪	Starcraft



LucasArts own the top of the chart.

X-COM: Apocalypse starts to climb.

PC WORLD STORES NATIONWIDE
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The last thing the 800 billion horrified Tauran viewers saw on their Live Video Link were the alien markings on the container...

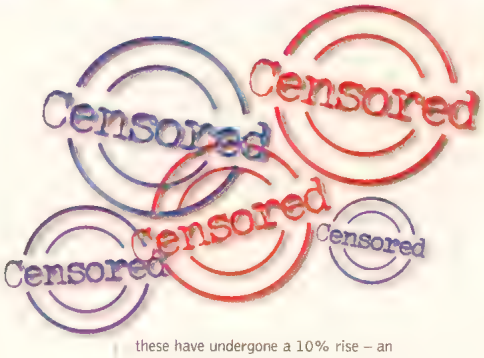
The entirely unintentional 200 megaton first strike of a bloody intergalactic war had just been delivered...

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

FALLEN HAVEN COMING SOON FOR IBM PC CD-ROM. www.imagicgames.co.uk

Shock tacti

Following last month's debate about the cost of games, we return to perhaps the only more discussed subject in the industry's history – advertising. By JAMES FLYNN



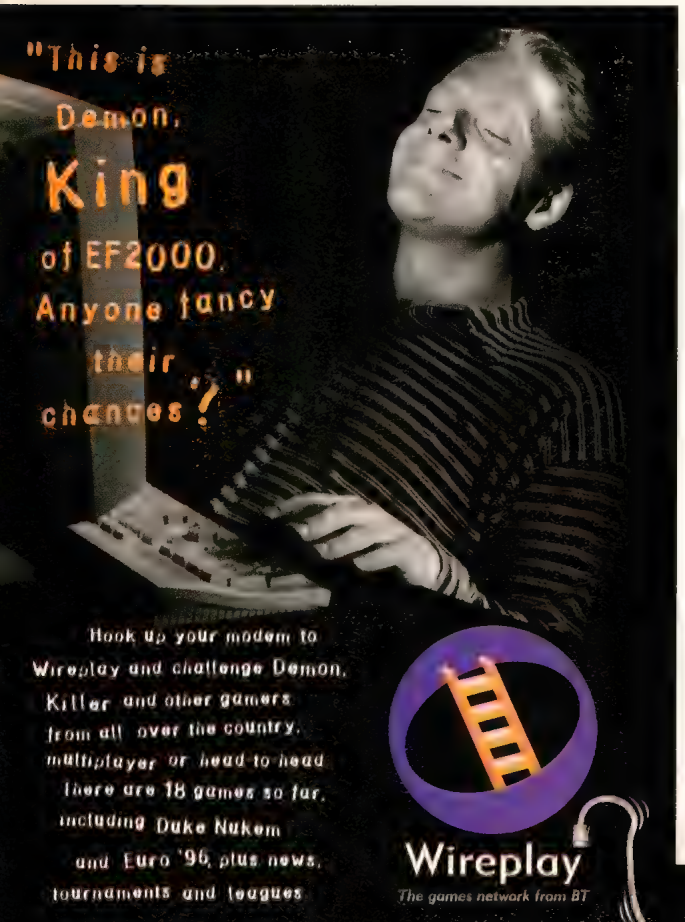
SPECIAL REPORT

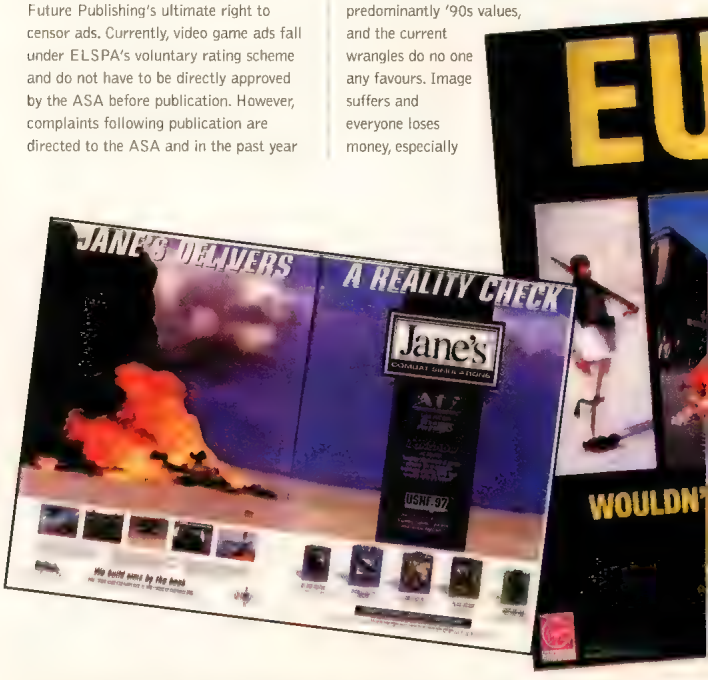
BACK IN 1984 PALACE released a game called *Barbarian*. Despite being an excellent beat-'em-up it's not remembered for playing well or having innovative features. Rather, it was the ad campaign that places it in the video game hall of fame. *Barbarian*'s full page ads featured a strapping young ass called Maria Whittaker. 1984 was when Page 3 meant Page 3 and she, along with Sam Fox, meant big business and big...erm... silicon bills for potential copycats. Maria was plonked in a tight bikini, sat at the feet of a muscley man (Wolf the Gladiator, actually) and told to look buxom in a Red Sonia kind of way. It worked, everyone talked about her and the predominantly teenage audience lapped up the game by association.

Today, after 12 years of circular debate, the scene has changed depressingly little. You may have noticed recently that a few less than subtle banners have been splashed across PC GAMER and other Future Publishing titles' adverts. Gametek's naked Jo Guest with her black game box and air-brushed-in knickers, 3DO's bull's testicles and brains complete with censored box, and Interplay's mutilated teddy-bear *Disruptor* campaign have all been altered before being accepted. Virgin's *Red Alert* ads have been banned altogether because of the 'anti-European' message they portray.

Both sex and violence remain hot (if unoriginal) topics of discussion throughout the industry and, predictably, there's been much discussion about Future Publishing's ultimate right to censor ads. Currently, video game ads fall under ELSPA's voluntary rating scheme and do not have to be directly approved by the ASA before publication. However, complaints following publication are directed to the ASA and in the past year these have undergone a 10% rise – an alarming figure but almost certainly one that's less than the increase in the number of active gamers during the same period.

However, whatever your views on the exploitation of women, the rise of the promiscuous and violent modern society, the consequent moral corruption and the mating habits of badgers, the furore comes as the video game industry is, for the first time ever, on the verge of dropping its teen anorak image and being accepted as a responsible mass market business. Part of the industry's charm and accessibility is that it is run by young people with predominantly '90s values, and the current wrangles do no one any favours. Image suffers and everyone loses money, especially


"This is Demon King of EF2000. Anyone fancy their chances?"
Hook up your modem to Wireplay and challenge Demon Killer and other gamers from all over the country. multiplayer or head-to-head there are 18 games so far, including Duke Nukem and Euro '96, plus news, tournaments and leagues
Wireplay
The games network from BT



The implication of real people burning to their death in tanks is an ad that was viewed by everyone concerned as acceptable, and it generated no complaints.

CS

when politicians hold up blood filled baths and use them as weak excuses to impose what should be unneeded censorship on the publishing industry.

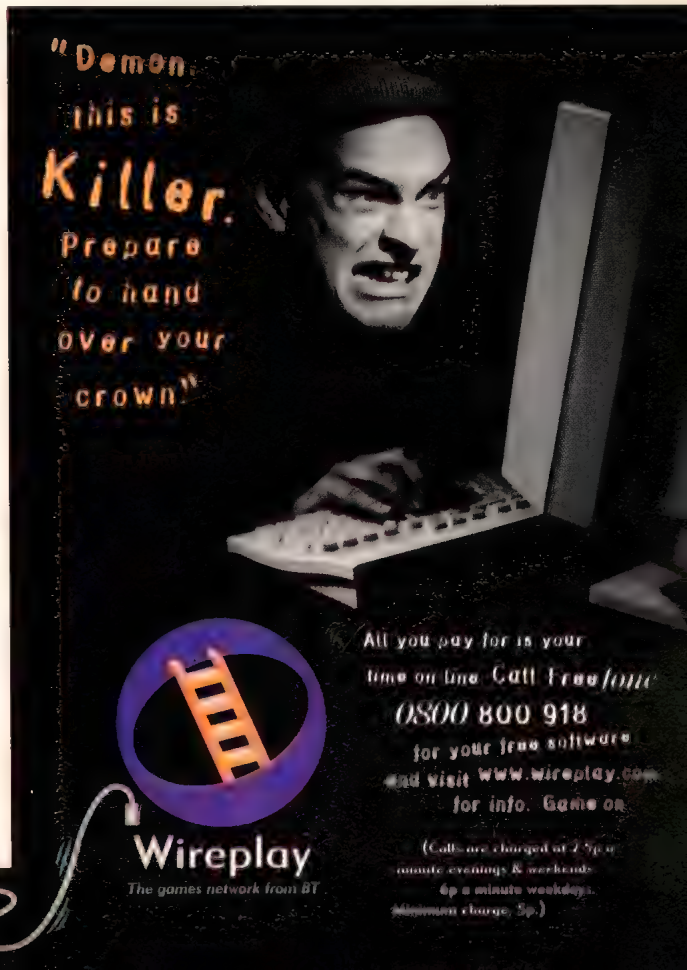
The days of *Voyeur*, *Night Trap* and *Phantasmagoria* are almost over. The industry's experimentation with dramatically simulating 'reality' in its games has proved a resounding failure and yet it seems intent on habitually digging itself into holes. Some would say that's part of its loose-cannon charm and some phone up and complain when Mary Whitehouse wears skirts that don't reach the ankles.

As Steve Jarratt, current y Editor of T3 and writer at Zzap! 64 when Barbarian was released, says: "Nobody on the magazine took it too seriously then. It was pretty tongue in cheek, but we didn't get any letters about it. In fact, the bigger stink was caused by the fact that in the game you could chop people's heads off, and watch them being kicked off the screen by an imp." Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose... PSG

(Right) The Gametek *Battlecruiser 3000AD* ad that sparked off the current row, in all its original glory (sic).

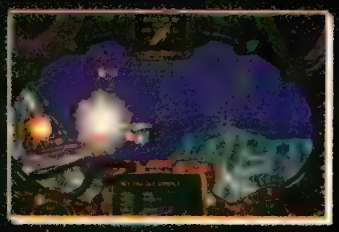
(Top) The version you'll be seeing in PC GAMER, which has about as much relevance to the game as the original.

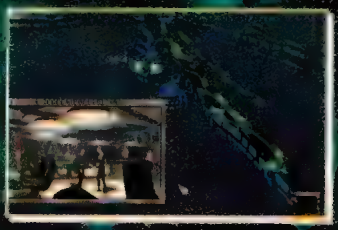
The revised version of the *Red Alert* adverts that you will not be seeing in any Future Publishing magazine. And why are we printing it then, some of you will no doubt ask? Because we want your opinions on it and this is a mature magazine, that's why.


"Demon, this is Killer. Prepare to hand over your crown."
All you pay for is your time on line. Call Freefone 0800 800 918 for your free software and visit www.wireplay.com for info. Game on.
(Calls are charged at 2.5p a minute evenings & weekends, 6p a minute weekdays. Minimum charge 5p.)
Wireplay
The games network from BT

Intense Underwater Action . . . Better Hold Your Breath!

ARCHIMEDEAN DYNASTY





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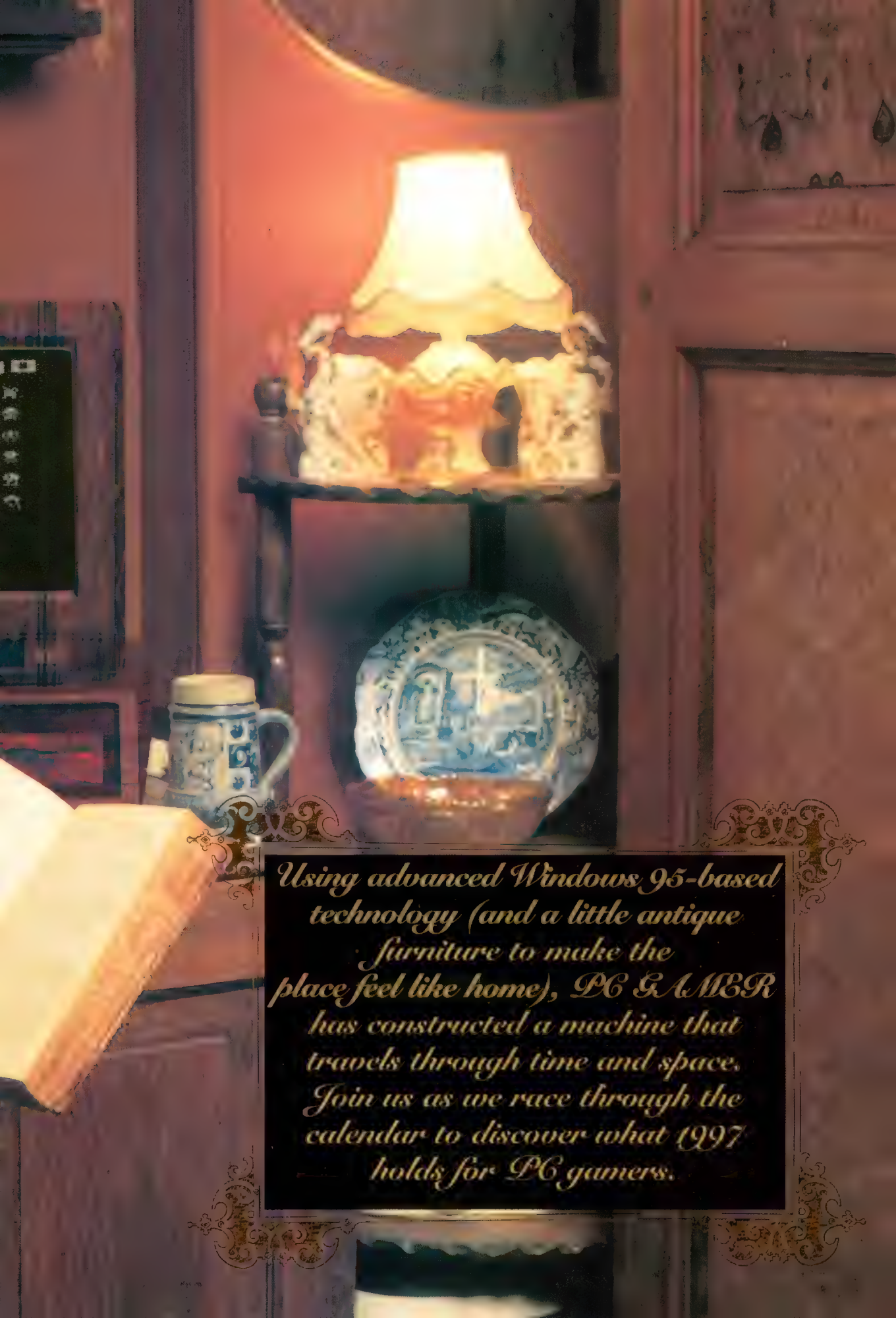
The PC Gamer

1997 Preview

It's here again! The complete guide to every game your PC will play host to over the coming year.



Using advanced Windows 95-based technology (and a little antique furniture to make the place feel like home), PC GAMER has constructed a machine that travels through time and space. Join us as we race through the calendar to discover what 1997 holds for PC gamers.

First stop... Spring 1997

THE ENGINE WHIRRS TO a halt, the time travel transmogrifier unit falls silent, and reality pulses back into existence. Checking the dials of our time machine we confirm that this is indeed London, spring 1997. Stage One accomplished. Engaging 'park' we rise from the Edwardian comfort of our time machine's spatially distorted lounge and assemble at the creaking ice cold exit to the outside. Swinging open the police box doors, the spring air rushes in and we step out into the dark alley that's just a short walk from the Virgin Megastore we are seeking.

The pristine plate glass window protects a wall of boxes that will allow us to compile the only authoritative tome of every game that will be released in 1997 for your benefit. But some of those game names... they look strangely familiar. Can it be we haven't skipped through the circuits of time at all? As budding time travellers, the future holds many paradoxes and this could well be one such. It's only as we realise that half the games on the shelves were supposed to have come out in 1996 that we understand. These are indeed next year's PC releases we're looking at, it's just that release date slippage has taken its toll. Hence the spring of 1997 has a few games which you may just have heard about already.

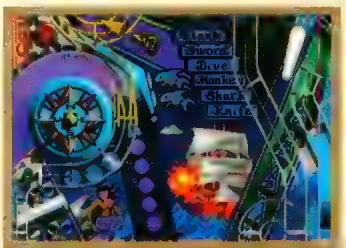
Gazing through the store window we see all the big games that have been released over the last few months. LucasArts' ***X-Wing vs TIE Fighter*** and ***Jedi Knight*** both occupy a mighty portion of the display, MicroProse's ***X-COM: Apocalypse*** has finally been completed, and Interplay's ***MDK*** looks to have been as big as it promised. Sitting beside ***Sega Rally*** and Looking Glass' ***British Open Golf*** it looks as if spring is going to be a fine time to own a PC.

As we walk inside, a mass of new titles are spread before us. Time Warner's ***Safecracker***, ***Dragonheart*** from Acclaim, the on-line capable ***Air Warrior II*** from Interactive Magic, and the *Bomberman*-meets-Running Man rotate-athon that is Activision's ***Blast Chamber***. Just below this little lot we see ***Off Road***, a 3D racer from MicroProse, the sequel-tastic ***Absolute Bedlam*** from Mirage, and BMG's ***Firo & Klawd***, an animal infested mix of platform and blasting loaded with rendered sprites and scrolling backdrops.

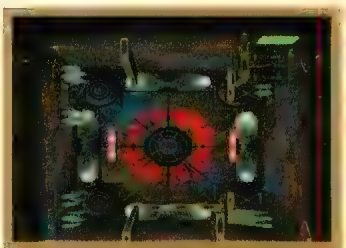
3D0's ***Bladeforce*** is up and running on one of the PCs in the window. Lush texture landscapes float by, as the player's character – a bloke in a suit with a helicopter blade stuck to his shoulders – whirrs around shooting at various robotic enemies. It's all moving remarkably smoothly, given the detail of

Safecracker – Time Warner

Off Road – MicroProse



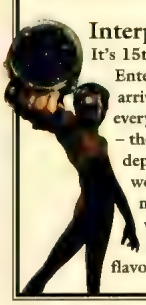
Slamtilt – 21st Century



Blast Chamber – Activision

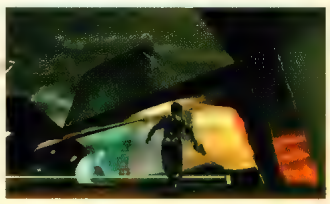
MDK

Tip



Interplay

It's 15th January and Shiny Entertainment's *MDK* has just arrived. Taking a closer look everything seems to be in order – those earthy 3D graphics depicted the eight different worlds and the clever head-mounted sniper's gun all working to give the game something of a unique flavour. And Shiny's promise to mix up heavy bloodshed with decent enemy strategies seems to have been kept. That story line about a genetically engineered dog and the insane Doctor Fluke Hawkins is just a little daft, mind. But then that's Shiny for you.



the 3D. Nearby lies a display box for a new Blue Byte ***Settlers 2 Mission Disc***, UbiSoft's long-awaited and slightly delayed ***Street Racer***, plus Sega's saucy FMV escapade ***Sacred Pools***, as well as a conversion of their Saturn sideways scroller, ***Three Dirty Dwarves***.

Moving on through the first aisle we chance across Konami's ***NBA In The Zone***. Featuring a textured 3D system (as we suspect everything in 1997 might) for the court and players, it also scores by featuring five-on-five matches. It's certainly a very different proposition to Acclaim's game of the movie, ***Space Jam***, which teams up Michael Jordan with Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and friends. Quite what to make of Electronic Arts' ***Tender Loving Care*** we don't know, though ***Longbow 97*** looks like a more reliable proposition. EA also have ***Ascaron's Hexagon Cartel*** here, along with the promising ***Kill, Krush & Destroy***, a post *Command & Conquer* game from Australia-based Beam Software.

21st Century are rolling out another pinballing simulation. This one goes by the name of ***Slamtilt***, and boasts multi-ball modes, simulated magnetic and moving parts, and 3,000 frames of animation for the display panel alone. Just below there's an Activision banner draped over ***A-10 Gulf***, ***Dogfight*** and ***Dark Reign***. We deduce the first two are flight sims, while the packaging of *Dark Reign* describes it as an advanced arcade wargame, with features such as true terrain-dependent line-of-sight, adjustable autonomy for battle units and a science fiction scenario which allows for soldiers with morphing and body snatching capabilities.

Finally, we find Codemasters' ***Jonah Lumuh Rugby*** at the end of the aisle, as well as – and you're not going to believe this – Bullfrog's ***Theme Hospital***. Sure, we've had previews of the comedy operations and serious medical management elements of the game countless times, but to see the thing finished and in the shop window is almost too much. Reeling from the shock, we hurriedly scoot round the corner and make notes on what we've just seen. After a few minutes of frantic scribblings we manoeuvre ourselves up a few feet, getting a good vantage point ☛

Sega Rally

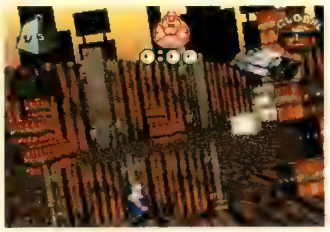
Sega

When we last caught sight of the PC incarnation of Sega's pride and joy, all the elements seemed intact, but the frame rate was only really up to scratch when using a reduced window mode. The intervening months have seen the programmers working hard to get the game up to speed, however, with the result that even a P75 can handle the graphical complexities of this eagerly awaited coin-op conversion. Network and modem multi-player modes have also been added, and all four tracks (including bonus circuit 'The Lake') have been reproduced, which all means you'd probably do well to start saving right now.

Trash It

Warner

Oh, how we've waited for this one. We realise that the ability to leap forward a few months is a wonderful thing indeed, as we watch developers Rage burn the midnight oil to complete this console-esque platform game. Naturally there's a twist or two, the primary one being the hero's love of oversized hammers, which he uses to bash the various bad guys when he's not mincing around the screen with a hoover or firing off oversized missiles. And then there's the very strange 3D aspect. The pictures may suggest a regular side-on view of the cartoon madness, but in the world of *Trash It*, it's possible to move in and out of the screen. Highly impressive stuff.



Tip for 97

Dark Reign – Activision

Jonah Lumuh Rugby – Codemasters

Theme Hospital – Bullfrog

Erin Roberts.

producer of Pyramaze's The Darkening, an interactive movies

"At the moment, if you want a story well told, then I'd say filming is a good thing. It adds to the realism. I don't want to class *The Darkening* as that sort of game, but a lot of interactive movies are really just glorified films. There has to be a game in there or there's no point. But I think in just over two or three years it'll be possible to create enough polygons to produce images of comparable quality. When you can generate actors like that, then everything will change."

Exhumed – BMG

The Crow – Acclaim

Red Baron 2 – Sierra

with which to mooch around the store in search of other new PC releases. Like ***Exhumed*** from BMG, for instance. We remember this as a massive hit on the consoles, but then they didn't have *Doom* at the time, much less *Quake*. BMG also have the improbable ***Lunar Golf*** and equally spherical ***Que-d Up*** on sale here. The former has golfers walking on the moon, whacking balls up 1,000 yards at a time, and generally trying to master the effects of reduced gravity while taking in the 360-degree views of craters, canyons and lots of rock. *Que-d Up* is a rather more down-to-earth affair, being a 3D pool simulation. The inclusion of such serious elements as trick shots, playing guidelines and replays are somewhat offset by novelty tables and a soundtrack which is described as mimicking those of cheap '70s porn movies.

Cruising along the game-stacked shelves we catch sight of yet another refugee from last year, ***Red Baron 2*** from Sierra. And what should be lurking beside it but a whole row of Acclaim games, including a *Dungeons And Dragons*-approved 3D beat-'em-up, ***Iron & Blood***. Acclaim's take on ***Magic: The Gathering Battlemage*** is also here, this version being a real-time, networkable role playing overhead 3D adventure, rather than a simple conversion of the card-based game. Then there's ***The Crow: City Of Angels***, which looks like some kind of *Streets Of Rage* update, the difference being this has 3D polygonal characters, locations sampled straight out of the movie and around 50 fighting moves. ***WWF In Your House*** is also present and correct, but you probably already guessed there'd be something along those lines lurking here.

Handily, a couple of teenagers are stood discussing whether to buy Team 17's ***Euromanager***. Moving in a little closer, we can hear the pair discuss the merits of the four-player option, the 400 teams of 12,000 players, and the various mini-game scenarios that complement the full blown thing. It looks like they're going to buy it, along with Microsoft's new *MechWarrior* style thing, ***The Condemned***. Strange, we would've thought Microsoft's other newie, the vaguely *Civilization*-ish ***Ages Of Empires***, would've been more up their street.

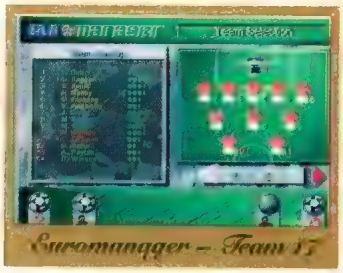
Browsing further along the game racks, we see that Philips Media's animated cartoon-meets-driving game oddity, ***Demon Driver***, has finally been released, along with ***NFL Total Control Football*** and ***UEFA Champions League***, a 3D football game developed by Krisalis. Telstar also have a couple of spring chickens in the form of 3D graphic adventure ***Star System***, and the highly individual ***Siege***. From what we can glean here it's a 14th century medieval romp, using a mixture of real-time strategy and arcade elements, all wrapped up in a polygon-based display system.

Titus are a little on the quiet side,

Principles Of Fear

Cyberdreams

Looking forward in time we find Cyberdreams, where work has just finished on *Principles Of Fear*, a game which has come from the mind of Nightmare On Elm Street creator Wes Craven. Something called the Seven Mortal Fears form the basis of the game, with a real-time 3D engine rather than hand-painted backdrops working to map out this psychologically potent action adventure.


Euromanager – Team 17

F1

Psygnosis

The finesse of the PlayStation original without the niggling bugs is what the Psygnosis playtesters are working to ensure when we materialise unseen in their midst. Watching on as several machines play host to the game, the main game elements appear to have made it onto the PC intact, and with support for Windows 3D accelerator cards too. The voice of Murray Walker can be heard blasting from every machine, commenting on the performance of real drivers as they power round the 17 circuits to the sound of very loud rock music. It may share the subject matter, but there's much to differentiate this from Sir Geoffrey's *F1Grand Prix 2*.

Iron & Blood – Acclaim

with an update of ***Virtual Chess*** the only newie on the shelves. The same can't be said for the ever prolific Psygnosis, however, whose *Alone In The Dark*-ish movie licence ***City Of Lost Children*** is gracing the springtime with its presence, along with the vaguely *Micro Machines*-esque ***Speedster***, and ***Riot*** – a futuristic sports game that blends football, basketball, ice hockey and violence (though there's no gore). There's also Psygnosis' ***Zombieville***, a rendered point-and-click adventure, as well as a futuristic strategy adventure called ***The Fallen***. Real-time 3D, a whole load of weapons and vehicles, and a journey right across a Mad Max-influenced America are at the heart of this game, which pitches vicious law enforcers against the dropouts.

Moving along to the next row of PC software, we spy Eidos' ***Apache***, an excellent-looking flight sim by Simis, and ***Sierra Pro Pilot***, from you know who. The box blurb for this one explains how it welds Novalogic flight models to Sierra's 3Space graphics system, for non-violent cruises above all of the USA and Canada (cities, railroads, rivers and all), all viewed to a horizon distance of 25 nautical miles. Sierra's ***Front Page Sports Golf*** has also been released, with design by the man ☛

Grand Theft Auto

BMG

Tip for

After some argument about exactly what co-ordinates we should feed our time machine in order to infiltrate DMA Design's top secret base, we find a compromise, tap the numbers in, and appear beside an oil rig somewhere in the North Sea. A time machine is quite conspicuous here. So much for teamwork. A few friendly bouts of fisticuffs and another jump through subspace later and we're watching *Grand Theft Auto* play out its car-obsessed plotlines. The overhead view initially disappoints, but in motion the 3D subtleties become apparent, and it does look like there's an awful lot to do, what with illegal street races, kidnappings, bombs in car boots, jeeps and tanks, motorbikes, police and medical vehicles, even trains to contend with. It looks like every kid's toy car fantasies come to life. And DMA have even thoughtfully included a 16 million colour option, too. Bless 'em.

British Open Golf

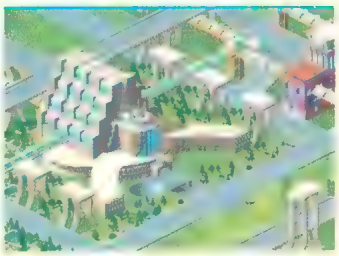
Virgin/Looking Glass

Looking at Looking Glass we fully expect to find the simulation kings working on more hyper-realistic flight stuff, or at the very least a sequel to *Terra Nova*. Instead a golf game is the centre of attention, and one based on the British Open at that! Still, that 3D know how has been put to good use, realistically modelling the buildings and terrain of the St Andrew's and Royal Troon courses. And trust Looking Glass to go to extreme lengths to ensure the swing mechanism and ball movements are modelled as cleverly as possible. Maybe we'll forgive them for straying from the straight and narrow just this once.

X-COM: Apocalypse

MicroProse

Wandering down Mythos' way we catch them working their top-secret project for Virgin, while the freshly minted MicroProse title *X-COM: Apocalypse* is being played by a couple of people. And what a leap over the earlier *X-COM* games it is, and not just because of the rendered SVGA graphics, either. This time the action is based around a single city, which is naturally under invasion from aliens. Three game phases map out the initial investigation of inexplicable incidents, real-time combat with airborne X-COM forces, and then squad-level combat against the enemy. As we watch the game unfold it becomes obvious that this section is real time rather than turn-based, which certainly adds a sense of pace to the game. And with those much more detailed X-COM soldiers, the actual battles now look to be much more satisfying, with all sorts of lifelike actions now possible. First impressions suggest Mythos and MicroProse have come up trumps again.



Ecstatica 2

Psygnosis

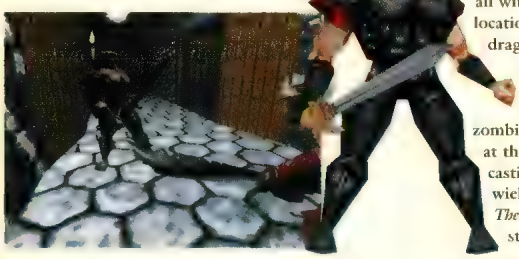
Cruising up to Psygnosis' Liverpool office we discover the reason for *Urban Decay*'s delay; Andrew Spencer has been working on this sequel instead. And what a biggie it is, with something like 2,000 different camera views of such spooky locations as a graveyard, castle, dungeons, and forest. One thing that hasn't changed from the original is the horror theme and propensity for bloodletting. The ellipsoid characters have also been retained, though they're now far more detailed, with SVGA bringing the best out of the rounded shapes. Let's hope the control problems have also been addressed.

Conquest Earth – Eidos

Deathtrap Dungeon

Eidos

The next stop on our unfeasible tour of space and time takes us to the former stomping grounds of Domark, now part of the Eidos empire. Here we stumble upon our old friend *Deathtrap Dungeon*, finally ready to flex its 3D motion-captured muscles, wear its Fighting Fantasy licence with pride and dazzle one and all with its light-sourced locations. We watch dragons beat their wings, orcs stomp through corridors, and zombies fare rather badly at the hands of spell-casting and sword-wielding heroics. *Into The Shadows* faces some stiff competition.



Extreme Assault

Blue Byte

Something tells us this won't be the last helicopter shoot-'em-up that materialises in 1997, but Blue Byte's thoroughly action-based chopperfest looks likely to set a very high standard for others to match. First- and third-person viewpoints are available in a visually superb futuristic romp, which has the player rescuing hostages and battling against extra-terrestrials over peaceful villages, industrial plants, through icy canyons and down into cave systems. Sections where the hero must leave the relative safety of the 'copter also feature. The blend of deliberately rugged ground texturing with highly detailed objects is most intriguing.

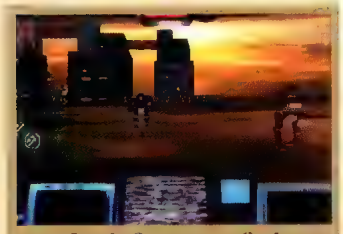
responsible for *Links 386*. There's a new type of swing simulation, as well as proper 3D golfers moving around real 3D courses.

Cyberdreams have obviously been busy over the winter months, with both ***Blue Heat*** and ***Noir*** in stock here. *Noir*, published in the UK by Codemasters, is a point-and-click adventure so determined to mimic the dark style of 1940s Hollywood detective stories that the whole thing is presented in black and white (and just when you'd bought that great new video card), with the usual complement of femme fatales, corrupt officials and wise-cracking cops doing their best to thwart players as they attempt to discover the whereabouts of private investigator Jack Slayton. *Blue Heat* is a far riskier affair, using photo-realistic wraparound locations and a cast of actors including Elliott Gould, LA Law's Corbin Bersen and Playboy star Julie Cialini (it, er, says here on the box). Drug dealers, the Mafia, erotic dancers and a serial killer all feature. So quite why that ten-year-old kid is jigging up and down at a nearby checkout with a copy, we have no idea.

A little further down the line and we have more goods from Eidos, namely ***Conquest Earth*** and ***Steel Legions***. *Conquest* is a post *Command & Conquer* thing, with 65,000 colour rendered visuals, neural network artificial intelligence routines, and graphical effects such as vehicles leaving dirt tracks and blowing up dust. In the role of either evil alien invaders or threatened earthlings, players get to deploy air, land and sea units, juggling weapons production with research. *Steel Legions* is the other, much mooted AI-based game, using its 'revolutionary' intelligence routines in the vaguely *MechWarrior*-ish format, with full strategy or combat modes with which to get stuck into the robotic action.

Having missed the Christmas rush, Novalogic's ***Armored Fist 2*** and ***Comanche 3*** are both putting in an appearance. Both use a new improved Voxel system for the landscapes, unlike the recent *F22 Lightning*, but remain far in advance of the earlier titles in each series, particularly in terms of the detail on the actual vehicles and the complexity

Armored Fist 2 – Novalogic



Steel Legions – Eidos

of the mission structures. Next to this dynamic duo we find ***Shattered Reality*** and ***Breakpoint Tennis***, both from Ocean. *Shattered Reality* is a fully texture-mapped futuristic 3D blaster, with simulation-levels of attention to detail, and 16 different ships to pilot (each with a unique flight model). For the sporting title, Ocean have brought in BBC Wimbledon commentator Chris Bailey for the voice-over, as well as using motion capture for the players' movements.

Sitting pretty on a prime plinth is EA and Origin's ***Ultima Online***, a 'buy it then log on' affair which uses a couple of thousand other gamers from around the world to give the *Ultima* lands a touch more life. An SVGA, isometric 3D view greets adventurers (as will a large phone bill, no doubt) as they traverse the largest ever *Ultima* world map, doing pretty much whatever they like. Trading, property development, fighting, and progression through guilds are all possible in a game which poses few restrictions on its multitude of players.

The spring air has brought a fair few near-forgotten games out in bloom, including the 3D Build-based ***Shadow Warrior*** (a regular *Doom*-style tale of ninjas, nanotechnology and nasties), and Interplay's ***Dragon Dice*** and ***Norse By Norsewest: The Return Of The Lost Vikings*** features a couple of new characters, new weapons, rendered characters and platform puzzle environments. Epic MegaGames' ***Jazz Jackrabbit 2*** has also rather appropriately been completed in time for the spring, looking far more polished than the original shareware fan's favourite. A time-travel-based story (what a coincidence), more polished graphics, a multi-player mode, a new 3D sub-game and plenty of new comic moments are all contained within its innocuous packaging. It is even said to run at around 70 frames per second on a decent Pentium. Lawks.

The next game we find lurking on the Virgin Megastore shelves needs little introduction – we've been talking about Virgin/Westwood's *Lands Of Lore 2* for as long as we can remember. Given Westwood's history with *Eye Of The Beholder*, the free-roaming first-person adventuring ought to be well up to

Guts 'n' Garters

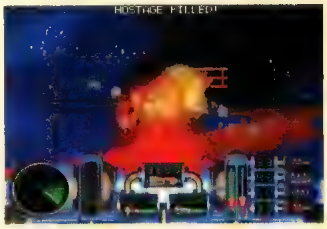
Ocean

Setting down in Manchester, we discover the facts behind Ocean's oddly monikered arcade adventure. Rendered backdrops and lovingly detailed main characters are the order of the day here, with Hank 'Guts' Carter and Stacy 'Garters' Pringle wandering through and interacting with the fetching locations. The 32,000 colour, motion-captured protagonists are the focus here, with plenty of neat tricks like footprints and correctly cast shadows working to blend our heroes with the backgrounds. Naturally a lot of shooting comes into it, and there does seem to be a fair few objects to interact with. Maybe there's life in the old *Alone In The Dark* game style yet.

QAD

Philips Media

Having raved about this technical marvel at the dawn of 1996, we did fear that a visit to developers Cranberry in the spring of '97 would show all the trickery with polar sprouts and fractal landscapes to be just a little old hat. Thankfully, the Cranberry mob have been working hard to refine this fast-paced, Choplifter-inspired shoot-'em-up, including phong shading for extra rounded ground detail, local light sources for extra moodiness, and adding a much welcomed SVGA mode along the way. Given the speed of the 3D system, why not?

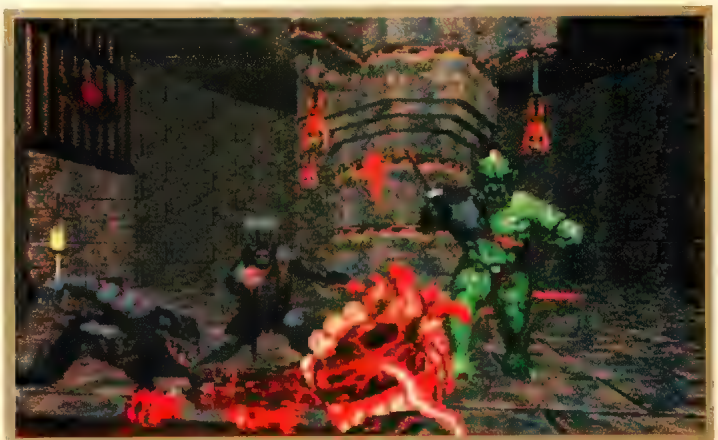


Aqua Tak – Criterion

Excalibur

Telstar

In a bizarre art imitating life scenario our time travelling leads us to Telstar, where a time travel-based game is just about complete. There's a scenario about a future Earth ravaged by a meteorite collision, but what you really need to know is that it's actually a sort of *Fade To Black* gone medieval sort of affair. The attention to detail on the polygonal characters really does look lovely.



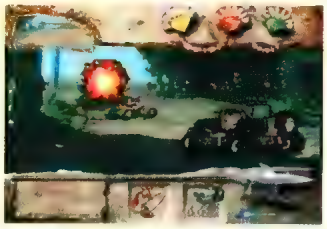
Shadow Warrior – 3D Realms

Hardcore 4x4 – Gremlin

Soul Hunt

Gametek

A Chinese whisper, an overheard conversation at Gametek (okay, okay, so they told us about it without any bother), and we're off to the heart of Europe to find out all about a game using footage shot in Israel. It turns out to be the same development team that married FMV with sprites in *Cyclemania*, and they're up to their old tricks. The difference is that this time the 3D road racing sections are battle based, and work alongside FMV-based point-and-click adventure sequences to weave a tangled tale of devil-worship. Ambitious stuff.

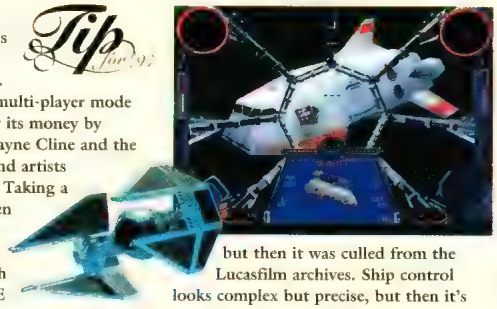


X-Wing vs TIE Fighter

Virgin/LucasArts

Tip (Jun 97)

X Wing vs TIE Fighter is just one of LucasArts' superb games for 1997. When we drop in, the multi-player mode is being given a run for its money by production manager Wayne Cline and the various programmers and artists involved in the project. Taking a gander at their on-screen fortunes we can't resist humming along to the music, as a whole bunch of battered-looking TIE Fighters square up against some brilliantly detailed X-Wing and B-Wing craft. The detail on the 3D models is near faultless, but then it was culled from the Lucasfilm archives. Ship control looks complex but precise, but then it's easy to be impressed by the acrobatics of pilots who've been writing and playing the thing for well over a year now.



Jedi Knight:Dark Forces II

Virgin/LucasArts

LucasArts' other great spring hope is under equally rigorous testing. Again the multi player mode is being fully utilised here, as suitably rugged polygon characters run and fight their way through an Empire base, light sabres flashing and guns blasting. There's no easy way to know just how the gameplay will match up to *Quake*, but the way *Jedi Knight* uses the concept of the light and dark sides of the Force (in the guise of jumping, healing and object-retrieving power-ups) certainly gives it a neat spin. And the role of a Jedi is the dream of every child of the '70s.

par (particularly after all this time), and the combination of real-time and pre-rendered images look like a good blend. Criterion have a couple of Virgin-published titles nearby, namely ***Sub Culture*** and ***Aqua'Tak***. Both are water-based babies, though the former is easily the more weighty game, with correct physics modelling of object movements and war-scarred underwater terrain. *Aqua'Tak*, by contrast, packs in semi-dressed people of the female persuasion, along with a modicum of water-bound racing, all realised using Criterion's own Renderware graphics engine, which the box claims runs at 20 frames per second on a P90.

Entering the last aisle of PC games (beyond this it's the new U2 album as far as the eye can see), we notice Gremlin's latest ***Premier Manager*** and ***Hardcore 4x4*** filling out the racks. A PlayStation conversion, *Hardcore 4x4* is one of several off-road driving games appearing this year, and uses Gremlin's True 3D system to simulate the racing of the various four-wheel-drive vehicles on offer. Because there are no rigid racetracks as such, drivers are free to blast off in any direction whatsoever, challenging the trucks to navigate glaciers, volcanic formations and cross-country shortcuts.

This comedy golf thing is obviously catching, because Mindscape have one by the name of ***Strange Golf*** here, right next to platform romp ***Marvel 2099***. A licence of an incredible 50-odd Marvel comicbook characters, it allows players to take charge of the futuristic incarnations of the various heroes (Hulk 2099, X-Men 2099, Fantastic Four 2099, Spiderman 2099, Punisher 2099, and so on) as they battle against some nasty bloke called Anthony Herod (where's his 2099 suffix, then?) in around 50 sideways-scrolling locations and 3D cyberspace sections. This sci-fi setting initially looks odd, but it does mean that the game features the cooler, more sinister versions of Marvel's favourites.

Marvel 2099 – Mindscape

Titanic – GTE

Nearing the end of our trip through the store, circa spring '97, we stop for a minute to get the lowdown on GTE's ***Titanic: Adventure Out Of Time***. A point-and-click adventure featuring accurately rendered locations of the famously flawed passenger ship, it has the rather novel feature of using one game CD to interact with the characters and collect clues to a mystery, then another CD with which to solve the mystery. The catch is that this second section depicts events from the iceberg collision onwards, meaning that the game must be completed in two and a half hours real time. Also adventure-based is GTE's ***Qin***, a *Myst*-ish point-and-clicker whose puzzles require research using an on-line encyclopaedia, rather than the usual logic-based problem solving.

Reaching the end of the aisle, numerous boxes of ***Reloaded*** fill out the shelves. This is Gremlin's sequel to the brutal *Loaded*, a game which never actually came out on the PC. An almost *Gauntlet*-ish overhead style is employed, with lots of modern explosion and lighting effects used to bring the copious amounts of violence up to date. Improvements over the original include special power skills, and the charming friendly fire mode, which renders other players as well as the bad guys, susceptible to your weapons.

Our mission here complete, we take our good selves back onto Oxford Street. But just before we leave something catches our eye. Could that really be Scavenger's ***Into The Shadows*** over there by the counter? Who knows? Time travel is full of paradoxes and this could easily be one. Walking back down the Easter-egg-lined displays we make a mental note to remember pastel colours seem to be 'in' this spring. Then it's round the corner, down the alley and into the time machine, which no-one has even spotted yet. Setting the time travel co-ordinates for summer we experience that now familiar warping sensation as we fade out of spring and head for our next stop.

Hooters

Merit

Formerly known as Oddball Engines, Merit's third-person 3D racing game is pitched directly against *Micro Machines 3* (which we'll be taking a peak at a little later on our travels), though not only does this one benefit from the earlier release date, but the more obviously cartoony graphics and multi-level track layouts could give it an edge. We can see that the 3D system is more than capable of handling the various zooms and camera-tracking tricks. And the wealth of characters to race ought to keep the bad gag lovers as happy as can be. But whether the gameplay can match that of the more familiar Codemasters effort is hard to tell from this sneaky viewing session.

War Gods

GT

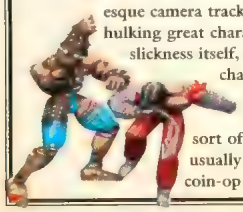
Having foolishly predicted that a 3D *Mortal Kombat* beat-'em-up would appear in '96, the sight of Midway's *War Gods* playing merrily away in GT's office makes us feel slightly vindicated. This is what we predicted, give or take the name, being a *Virtua Fighter*-style affair from the *MK* people. Our suspicions that these highly detailed fighters have been modelled on real people are confirmed when we see a familiar blond appear in the gaming arena. It's none other than Ms 'Sonya Blade' Hoskins, and she appears to be dressed rather less functionally this time round.

Into the Shadows – Scavenger

Theatre Of Pain

Mirage

Taking in the sights of Cheshire we opt to peruse the latest wares at Mirage, and find the programmers once again deep in beat-'em-up land. *Theatre Of Pain* is the genre taken to its most violent extremes, with numerous blades and edged weapons and plenty of bloodshed. While *Rise Of The Robots* leads us to have reservations about a new Mirage beat-'em-up, the action here looks seductive. That combination of 3D-esque camera tracking and hulking great characters is slickness itself, and the character designs are handled with the sort of panache usually reserved for coin-op titles.



Put on your shades and get ready for

Summer 1997

TUMBLING OUT OF A swirling vortex composed of sub-space particles, we re-materialise outside a vast shopping mall in Los Angeles. Well, over half the games released come from our US counterparts so it seems only polite to pay them a visit. And Laguna Beach is but an hour away and, well, this time travelling lark is pretty tiring, you know.

We track down Toys R Us in a labyrinthine construction the size of a small town back home. The vast amount of shelf space surely contains every PC game on sale at the moment. Plus, we notice upon entering, that there's a new hardware section devoted entirely to the 3D accelerator cards that are now beginning to be an essential part of every gamer's PC set-up. A preliminary dash round the store confirms what we suspected – many games today are running only with 3D card support. But it's the extensive software range rather than any technical guidance we're after, which is probably just as well.

Actua Golf – Gremlin

The Yanks are golf obsessed, and Gremlin's ***Actua Golf*** is the first game we spy to be competing for this lucrative market. The scenery shots on the packaging bode well, and it appears there's a real-time ball-tracking view and something like 1,500 voice samples from Peter Aliss.

Super League Head Coach is visible, as is Mindscape's ***Imperialism***.

Hexen II

GT

Departing from early summertime in Bath, we zip out over the Atlantic towards Id's offices, in search of the second ever game to use the *Quake* 3D engine. There's no sign of our prey here, so off we zoom again – with Id buddies Raven as the next stop. Re-materialising in their programmers' den we immediately see what we've been looking for. *Hexen II* is up and running in all its glory, using added cool effects like weather to the already impressive Id 3D system. The Raven programmers have coded some 30 levels for the game, with the destruction of the last three Serpent Riders as the ultimate goal. Observing Raven put their creation through its paces, we see that there are four character classes to choose from, with something like five different weapons for each, many of which can be powered up. The game environment is, as expected, different though familiar in feel – what with the inclusion of swimming sections. The ability to fly definitely adds a certain something, though, and of course the weapon types bring their own flavour to the game engine, just as the original *Hexen* did with the *Doom* system. All in all it looks great, but you wouldn't really need to look into the future to see that.

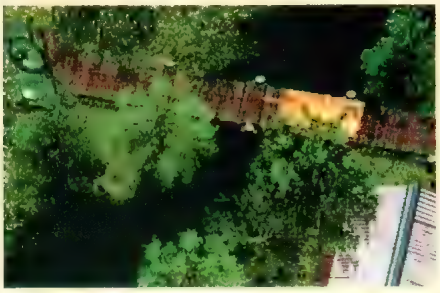
Stratosphere and the excellent-looking ***Constructor*** from Acclaim are here too, as is their *D* follow-up, ***Enemy Zero***. This sequel uses real-time 3D rather than that rendered stuff, which will hopefully banish the longevity problems of the original. And then there's Activision's ***Netstorm***, an Internet-based action wargame for up to 1,000 players (it says on the box here).

Further down the aisles we see a whole area devoted to ***Soviet Strike***, another clever sequel which reinterprets a dated idea in a 3D polygonal style and did really well on the PlayStation last year. There are a whole bunch of other Electronic Arts titles here, too, including ***Cricket 97***, a role-playing action game called ***Darklight*** (written by *Striker*-types Rage), ***FIFA Soccer Manager***, ***Need For Speed 2*** and ***688 Attack Sub 3***. The bizarre game-of-the-band thing, ***Queen: The Eye***, is here too. We

Army Men

Studio 3DO

From the Raven offices we decide to take a short skip through the pliable matter of space and time for a visit to 3DO's Californian headquarters. *Army Men* is what we find, and most intriguing it is too. Why nobody thought of taking the wargame back to its childhood roots we don't know. What Studio 3DO have done is to break away from the whole *Command & Conquer* style of action wargame, simply by giving players plastic soldiers and vehicles to play with, rather than the usual pseudo-realistic sprites. Soldiers caught in explosions melt, while tanks are modelled to be all plasticky and hollow. Army, Navy, Air Force and marine figures are available as opponents, with infantry, commandos, engineers and various artillery units all under player control. There's plenty of opportunity to see them all reduced to mounds of molten plastic, thanks to a range of bombs, flame throwers, missiles and guns. And just for that final authentic effect, they're all rendered in green or khaki colours – great stuff!

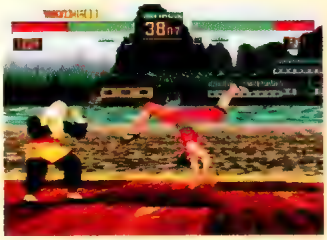


Virtua Fighter 2

Tip

Sega

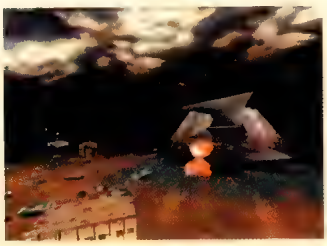
When we embarked on our journey, Sega hadn't even admitted to working on this one. But our suspicions are confirmed now, as we watch the game being played on practically every PC in their development offices. As with the original coin-ops and Saturn conversions, this second edition plays pretty similarly, but offers far superior graphics, and more detailed polygonal characters. There are a couple of new characters, of course, namely Shun Li and Lion, and each has special moves which utilise the 3D-ness of the arena in ways the original didn't ever really attempt. This may be something of a superficial improvement on the original, but that's exactly what made it so popular in the arcades. No doubt PC gamers will feel the same way.



YPA

Time Warner

The name rather cryptically refers to *Your Personal Apocalypse*. This one really does look gorgeous, all moody sci-fi landscapes, and a 3D system which boasts particle system calculations for more realistic smoke and fire effects. Unusually, it also appears to feature plenty of strategy elements, without sacrificing the spectacular combat side of things. However, it's hard to tell whether the average player is going to be able to cope with controlling the movement of a load of friendly units while strafing an enemy power station.



Nitendra Naik, product manager of Sega PC on the PC as an arcade system

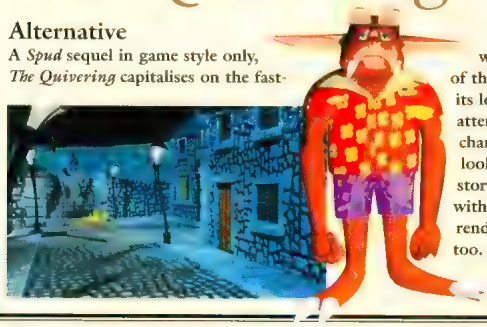
"PC CD-ROM will be the most profitable gaming platform in '97, as hardware prices continue to fall, the Pentium installed base maintains its remarkable growth, and Windows 95 makes PC a mass market gaming proposition. The development of the Pentium PC was essential to the launch of Sega PC. Previous technical limitations would have made *Virtua Fighter PC* struggle and so, even though we realise that 'Pentium PC Required' on the box eliminates a fair chunk of committed gamers, we're not going to follow the example of other developers and water down our games.

"PC gaming is changing. More and more gamers are getting bored with strategy/simulation games – they want the fun that they have in the arcade. The success of *Virtua Fighter PC* proved that arcade-perfect gameplay and graphics are possible. Further advances in 3D technology will also come on stream next year to make PC gaming even closer to today's coin-op arcade. For example, Compaq's next generation Presario PC range will run the PowerVR 3D accelerator, which offers unmatched 3D realism, and Sega PC will develop arcade hit titles for that range. As for other new games, just take a quick visit to your local arcade. If it's fast and 3D, it could be on your PC sooner rather than later."

The Quivering

Alternative

A *Spud* sequel in game style only, *The Quivering* capitalises on the fast-moving 360-degree wraparound viewing style of that adventure, but turns its less than serious attentions on classic horror characters and clichés. It looks like the more focused story line and greater care with location and character rendering has paid off too. And we loved the good-natured feel of the original.



Starcraft

Blizzard

The transformation from *Warcraft*-in-space style wargame, to a sleek looking, highly individual strategy experience is complete. Certainly, the way Blizzard have designed the opposing sides – the Zurgs, the Protoss and the Terransd – to work in entirely different ways is part of the reason for the fresh new feel here. As is the way each side possesses a different philosophy on war, and the way Zurgs lack the special powers of the Protoss but benefit from greater numbers, while the Terrans offer the sort of diversity offered by the Warcraft armies. And then there are the multiple weapon systems, the blend of attack and espionage missions that make up the 40 levels – we could go on, if there weren't so many other places in time and space yet to visit.

Tip for '97

Blood – Eidos

Unreal

Tip for '97

GT

We wondered whether jumping forward another six months in time would be sufficient to witness *Unreal* getting introduced to the light of day, but here it is. Or the first part of it, at least. This is the game proper, with its funky 3D system – clever blurring effects, huge polygon count and all – and a bunch of monsters which look to be well up to Id's standard. What it doesn't feature is the much-trumpeted world editor system – that's due to follow a little later. But having seen the game in action we can report that it really does look and move like a dream – and those localised light sources are something else.

4-4-2 – Virgin

X-Car – Bethesda

remember an EA PR person telling us how it wasn't a multimedia experience, rather a lot of puzzle solving and exploration interspersed with the band's songs. Most odd.

Nestling next to this lot is Eidos' ***Blood***, another *Doom*-style effort from Formgen. The blurb hints that, although it uses the Build Engine (as seen in *Duke Nukem 3D*) the game features real-time shadow casting. But then the bad guys are flat sprites rather than the more solid *Quake*-type creations. Virgin have a couple of sporty things on this aisle, in the form of an arcade baseball game called ***Grand Slam 97***, and ***4-4-2*** (can you guess the sport?). ***Fear The Night***, the first game from their own in-house UK team is on the shelves, too. And, we may be hallucinating here, but there's simply loads of boxes with the name ***Heart Of Darkness*** emblazoned on them. Some mistake surely. Maybe it's just the miracle season – we can see Bullfrog's ***Creation*** just a little further along, as well as the so-delayed-we'd-given-up-hope ***X-Car: Experimental Racing***, from Virgin and Bethesda.

Interplay have been getting all experimental with ***Of Light And Darkness***. Packaged in a suitably arty box, it's based on the creations of French artist Gil Bruvel, and apparently features full-motion video, non-linear puzzle solving, and a graphics system called Eden, which it's claimed is in advance of pretty much every other 3D system out there. Free movement through solid, fully rendered environments rather than texture-mapped ones is promised, with a surreal story involving a brother and sister sucked into a canvas. On a rather different tack, BMG's ***Mass Destruction*** sits nearby, just dying to show off its 3D technique, which uses something called 'Sprolygons'. Beneath the graphical trickery lies an action wargame,

Manx TT

Sega

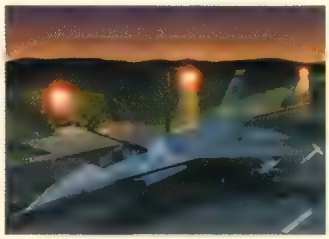
A series of clues and overhead conversations leads us to Liverpool, where we discover that Psygnosis are behind the conversion of Sega's fearsome 3D bike racing coin-op. Watching the game being put through its paces, there are few surprises – it's as close to the original as a PC could reasonably be expected to get, and there's been no attempt to simulate the motorbike chassis of the original using an old bike and a few bits of tin foil. What it does feature is a network mode, though, to simulate the multi-player editions of the machine found in the larger arcades.

Tip Jan '97

F-16 Fighting Falcon

Digital Integration

Flying unseen round the Digital Integration building, making childish aeroplane noises (it seemed like a good idea at the time) we can't help but notice the activity going on with a new flight sim. Based around the F-16, it looks like the 3D system has been stripped right down and rebuilt to feature better, more texture-mapped terrain. And, peering over the shoulder of one of the programmers, we can see some notes about a dynamic campaign system, as well as a few scribbles about another game based around some Russian Fighter. It looks like the recently expanded Digital Integration are about to get just that little bit more prolific, without sacrificing their famous attention to simulation detail.



Worldwide Soccer 97

Sega

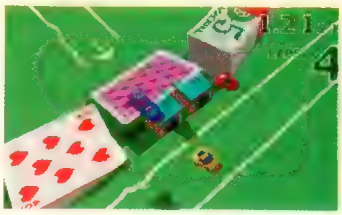
One more trip down to the hugely productive Sega offices reaps untold rewards, in the form of a glimpse of the PC conversion of their acclaimed soccer game. 3D footie games may be two a penny, and this one may lack some of the player definition of its competitors, but watching the thing in action we can't help but be impressed by the subtle animation touches that have been included. And neat little touches like the ability to run for short distances ought to give the game a more strategic bent, too. We're beginning to understand why some people rate this as the best modern soccer game around.

Creation – Bullfrog

Micro Machines 3 & Sampras Extreme Tennis

Codemasters

The primitive but exhilarating antics of previous *Micro Machines* games have never really found their way into the hearts of the PC gaming public, but watching this third effort undergo final testing at the Codies' Warwickshire retreat is enough to convince us that this one will make an offer few will be able to refuse. The miniature cars on household-based tracks idea hasn't really been changed, though as we look on it becomes apparent that there's a whole cache of weaponry to be collected and used. What really demands a mention, however, is the fact that the game has been completely re-interpreted



as a 3D polygon game, with a dynamically moving camera and some brilliantly detailed incidental detail. All this and 40 different race tracks, too. A further scout around and we also get a good look at the long-awaited *Sampras Extreme Tennis*. It looks, well, pretty much as it did in those previews back in 1996. But the intervening months haven't exactly been chock full with tennis games, and the fluid motion of this one could still make it a (cough) smash.

X-Factor – Gametek

Net 3D

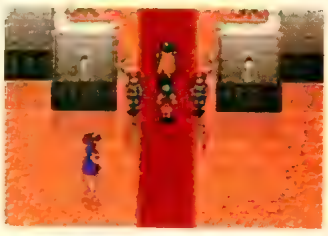
Cranberry Source

Materialising in the ever busy abode of Mr Jon Ritman and John Cook, we see they've got their team of programmers working hard to use their polar sprout system in a football game. We can't quite see what it's called, but we can see just how fast that uniquely Cranberry way of handling 3D makes the game. And the inclusion of real directional passing controls for once makes the ability to pass and shoot a matter of real skill. This, combined with more believable goalies, seems to give it a much more balanced, believable feel – not totally unlike the mighty *Sensible Soccer*. But then Mr Ritman did write the legendary Spectrum knockabout *Match Day*. And if this one's not called *Matchday 3D*, we're going to sulk.

Suikoden

Konami

Those Konami people did their best to keep their PC wares under wraps, but there's no stopping the PC GAMER team, particularly when we've got a machine in our grasp which makes a mockery of space and laughs in the face of old Father Time. Which is how we can tell you about this conversion of the two- and three-dimensional PlayStation role-playing game, about its video card accelerator supporting texture-mapped



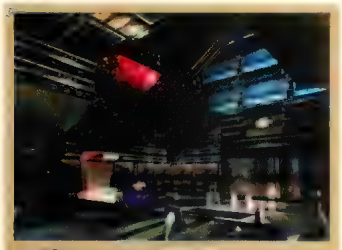
visuals, about the 100 characters to interact with, and the three battle modes (to cater for everything from one-on-one to full-scale army clashes). Sneaky, eh?

though one that's much more arcade based than most.

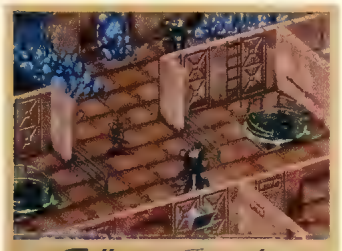
Team 17's 3D-based ***Arcade Pool*** is on display here, and if we're not mistaken they're planning an Internet version, too. Equally ballsy are ***The Golf Pro*** and ***Pro Pinball: Timeshock***, from Empire. The former has some amazingly photo-realistic scenery with which to compete against Gremlin's effort. The really exciting stuff is up ahead – Twister, new improved Action Men, even those new transformer-type toys. Alas, our mission dictates that we continue scouring the software aisles of the store rather than muck around in the toy section, so we carry on, making notes about the presence of Empire's ***Battleground Sinai***, DMA Design's ***Tanktics***, and comedy trivia quiz game ***You Don't Know Jack*** (both published by BMG, fact fans). BMG also have their visually lavish retro-experience that is ***360X***, stacked right next to Mindscape's *Star General* sequel, ***Pacific General***, a couple of new Infogrames and Argonaut games, and something called ***The Fireball*** from Warner Interactive.

The writers of *Super Stardust* have released their latest arcade-style creation, ***X-Factor***. And publishers Gametek have decided to put this one out at full price, such is their confidence in the game's retro appeal. In a completely different retro vein is Mindscape's latest, ***Adventures On Lego Island***. Built from big plastic building blocks, it's a game for the young 'uns, giving them a chance to become a lego character, wandering around a 3D lego town. Something tells us it won't only be the prescribed 6 to 12-year-old age group that this will appeal to.

Reaching the end of the first aisle feels like finishing a marathon, but there is still so much more to go. Turning back on ourselves we stumble across a section of Ocean stuff. ***Zoiks!*** is the one packed with Hanna Barbara characters, from Dick Dastardly to Fred Flintstone and Scooby Doo. The way it features the



Planetfall 2 – Activision



Fallout – Interplay

voices of the original characters as an integral part of the gameplay is cool, what with the player searching for various character voices that Dastardly has stolen. ***Project Airos*** is substantially less wacky, being a futuristic action strategy game (yes, another), with a 360-degree rotating overhead view instantly marking it out as something a little different. Much fast action looks to be the order of the day, and there's something here about a techno soundtrack, non-linear missions and the obligatory rendered cut scenes.

Oops, nearly didn't see Scavenger's ***Mudkicker*** lurking behind those football and racing games from GT. The unstoppable GT have also got something by the name of ***Oddworld Inhabitants*** out, as well as a few Atari titles, including ***T-Mek***. Beside these bundles of joy there's Telstar's platform puzzle game ***Joe Blow***, as well as a couple of ***Quake*** level packs – one designed for Id by Hipnotic Interactive (they were formerly the *Prey* team), and the other by Rogue Entertainment. Ah yes, we recall Id's Mike Wilson telling us how "the level packs will incorporate new weapons and monsters and *Quake* c progs".

It looks like Interplay's ***Die By The Sword***, ***Fallout*** and ***Starfleet Academy*** have all been released, the latter being a simulation of the cadet classes from which wannabe Kirks and Picards must graduate. Indeed Kirk, Checkov and Sulu are all featured as instructors, and with three different starships to master, 30 alien ships to battle, and a re-creation of the Trekkie favourite the Kobayashi Maru scenario, their words of wisdom could well be useful. *Die By The Sword* looks to be some kind of three-dimensional medieval combat game, with some kind of user interface to enable precise control of the various featured weapons as well as movement over the 3D modelled landscapes. And then there's ***Fallout***, a futuristic role-

Barnabee

GTE

Infiltrating GTE's UK office yields a clue about an affiliation with some UK developer, so we set the dials for another Warwickshire location, and reappear in the Attention To Detail complex. Here, the developers responsible for *Hulk* are putting the finishing touches to the very intriguing *Barnabee*. The moving camera system and 3D polygonal graphics may be all too familiar, but the idea of controlling a bee as he fights slugs, fleas and flies in menacing household locations certainly isn't.

Falcon 4.0

MicroProse

Tip

The emphasis has been on strategy rather than flight-based japes down at MicroProse recently, but our trip to their offices six months down the line reveals that the sim side are about to come back fighting. Watching *Falcon 4.0* take to the skies, we instantly note that the visuals are possibly the best of the new combat games on the block, without the game breaking away from the in-depth approach of its predecessors. And this one seems to have a whole new section of the game, with a virtual airbase to work from, interacting with squadron members, while the battle rages on in real-time outside. This could be amazing.

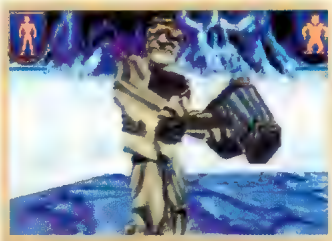
Agent Armstrong

Virgin

A year and a half since we first previewed it (a mere year from where you're standing), and King Of The Jungle's 3D-enhanced platform action is finally with us. Was it worth the wait? Just how much does that extra dimension add to the gameplay? Have these new developers got what it takes? Well, if we told you all that now, you wouldn't read the review in six months' time, would you?

Die By The Sword – Interplay

Die By The Sword



Die By The Sword

Wipeout 2097

Psygnosis

We couldn't get enough of the original *Wipeout*, so a covert visit to the Psygnosis office in search of the sequel is a rather exciting prospect. And rewarding, too, as we immediately discover the turbo-charged follow-up we've been waiting so patiently for. Lots of excellent techno music pounds out of the speakers as the improved 3D engine (one of the weaker aspects of the original, it must be said) puts its power behind the wider-ranging gameplay. The more variable difficulty levels and greater number of on-screen vehicles will also be most appreciated when we actually get to play the thing. Another 3D card special.

Adidas Power Soccer – Psygnosis

MTA – Warner

Outlaws – LucasArts

playing game based on the tabletop GURPS system.

Activision's ***Planetfall 2***, an update of the classic Infocom adventure, is merrily demoing itself on one of the Toys R Us PCs. Replacing the text-based 'control the robot' adventure with a real-time 3D effort ensures that this sequel looks lovely – but will it capture the flavour and humour of the original? Given their first effort at a Warhammer game, there are no such worries with ***Warhammer: Epic Space Marine***. It'll be interesting to see what becomes of LucasArts' ***Outlaws***, though. The artwork and Spaghetti Western-style scripting bode well, but that multi-element gameplay remains a risk. Still, when we last saw it the game looked fantastic.

The ever active Psygnosis have another few games out in time for the summer, with the mythological 3D adventure ***Athanor***, ***Sentient***, ***Monster Trucks***, and a conversion of their PlayStation hit ***Adidas Power Soccer*** all stacked up on the PC racks. *Sentient*, you'll remember, is their AI-infused

Carmageddon

SCI

We'd half expected to find a *SWIV 3D* sequel under way when we materialised in the SCI offices, but instead we find them putting *Carmageddon* to bed. One to upset the Mary Whitehouse types, it's a *Death Race 2000* influenced thing. A 3D car racing game with a sick sense of humour is perhaps the best way to describe what we catch sight of. Yeuch! Somebody just crushed a pedestrian. And there goes a cute animal. So that's what the spikes on the front bumper were for. We'd like to tell you more, but we're busy looking to see if our time machine came installed with sick bags.

Interstate 76 – *Activision*

Bloodlust – *Philips*

adventure game, where conversation and stylised polygon characters are the focus. *Monster Trucks*, unsurprisingly, is a rival to Microsoft's similarly themed game. Coding has been handled by the *Destruction Derby* authors.

Ubisoft's ***Pod*** is another one up and running on a display PC, and, my, it's fast, despite the fact that it's all in gloriously detailed SVGA. Then again, it does seem to need a P120 at the very least. The futuristic racing theme recalls *Hi-Octane*, though thankfully the eight vehicles here are of the more responsive wheeled variety. Next to *Pod* we find Warner's second minimally titled offering for the season, ***MIA***. It's the latest airborne game from flight sim veterans Simis, covering the Vietnam conflict. The high resolution 3D landscape system looks fetching, though we're less convinced about the proliferation of in-game movie sequences. And it's one of the first MMX games.

"Funk will even the odds," proclaims a bright yellow box which can't help but catch our eye. This'll be Activision's ***Interstate 76***, then. It's a 3D shooting and driving thing given quite possibly the daftest bit of presentation gloss ever. The game's two heroes wear bellbottoms, possess unfeasibly big hairdos, and drive around in a 'muscle car', Shaft-style funk music blaring out. And all this with *MechWarrior*-style 3D. Particularly, er, groovy is the way the cut scenes are purposefully polygonal-looking, so as to blend in with the in-game action. A crushed-velvet cousin of The Blues Brothers, if you will. And all with a Charlie's Angels kind of logo, too.

Moving swiftly along, we notice GTE's ***Atlantis***, Philips' ***Bloodlust*** (developed by System 3, no less), and no doubt slightly insane ***Woodruff 2*** (from Sierra) all loitering on the shelves. Sierra's other summer biggie, ***Cloak***, is also here. This must be the ambitious science fiction espionage game we've been hearing about. There's a plot which has players controlling a robot on the homeworld of a race called the Bulbs, using three different windows to perform several spying tasks at once.

As we near the end of the PC shelf space, we catch sight of Maxis' ***SimGolf*** and ***SimCopter*** offerings. It'll be interesting to see how people take to the latter's idea of piloting around full 3D interpretations of *SimCity* locations, rescuing people, putting out fires and other acts of daring do.

MicroProse have the honour of rounding off our summer tour of Toys R Us with their ***Agents Of Justice*** and ***1943: European Air War*** catching our eye just as we prepare to depart for the leafy brown shades of the autumn. Agents appears to be in the *X-COM* isometric strategy vein, albeit with futuristic superheroes and a battle against super-powered mutants as the central theme. *1943* is, rather obviously, a follow-up to *1942: Pacific Air War*, even more obviously moving the 3D flight sim action round the globe a bit, so as to have the Germans rather than the Japanese as the enemy. The historic and custom missions and the dynamic career structure are nice touches, while the ability to work up from wingman flights to group leader ranking should ensure a good learning curve. And if the historical accuracy doesn't light your fire, then the ability to get involved in skirmishes involving up to 32 planes might just do the trick. If not, then perhaps the next few months' worth of releases will have something to offer. Feeding our machine with the appropriate numbers, the lightning arcs across the room as the transmogrifier powers up and we fade out.

TFX3-F22

Tip

Ocean/DID

Flying off once again we head for the DID offices. Inside, *TFX3* is up and running on the office PCs, and, my, is it graphically impressive. Looking on we see that this latest sim models the experimental F22 aircraft with some precision, and DID have even seen fit to include a tactical command section, making it possible to play the thing almost as a wargame, as well as trying out the famously realistic DID flight modelling. As we watch, one of the team takes his plane – now with detailed texture detail – low down over the ground, affording us an excellent view of the new terrain rendering system. We notice that even the colours and lighting change smoothly as day turns to night. He's now switched from a desert to a maritime-based mission, in preparation for a multi-player game with some other members of the development team. We can also see a few of the programmers beavering away on something with tanks in it. Something with the working title of Ground Warfare Technology Demonstrator perhaps? Surely this will be a candidate for the best ever flight sim award when it's released.

Battlemech: Mechcommander

MicroProse

Setting the co-ordinates for a second visit to the MicroProse offices, we find that FASA, the creators of the Battletech games, have switched to here from Activision. So this could be called MechWarrior 3 if we weren't being so damned accurate. The publisher isn't the biggest difference, though, because it looks like there is a whole army (up to 24, in fact) of machines to take control of this time, in a fight to regain the Clan's homeland from the Jade Falcon Clan. Naturally the graphics are of the crisp SVGA variety, and the ability to go multi-player over networks and modems looks like fun. And just as we prepare to teleport to our next destination, we stumble upon details of a couple more *MechWarrior*-based games, due for release over the next year or two. Lucky, eh?

SimCopter – *Maxis*

SimGolf – *Maxis*

Goodbye summer, hello Autumn 1997

SITTING AROUND IN THE splendour of our time machine we discuss where to head next. Then a great idea slaps us firmly on our collective foreheads – why not visit the PC GAMER offices? Not only will we find out what our future selves look like, but we'll be able to see what we'll be playing and reviewing a few months down the line. And so, without anywhere near enough thought for the consequences, we adjust the dials, stoke up the fire and voyage into the future once again.

Needless to say, we're not entirely sure of what to make of the scene that greets us. This is the PC GAMER team all right, but who'd have thought things would change so much in one year? It's unbelievable, frankly, but that *Curse Of Monkey Island* cover looks fantastic. In an attempt to shake off the strange 'walking over your grave' sensation that's overcome us, we try to focus on the new games lying around the office.

It looks like Eidos have just delivered a couple of new flight games – ***Confirmed Kill*** and ***Flying Nightmares 2***. Both support 3D graphics cards, another trend that was just beginning when we left the relative normality of December 1996. *Flying Nightmares 2* has an interesting multi-player option where one player can control the strategic side of things, while others take to the skies in a Harrier 2+ or AH-1W helicopter and actually get involved in the 3D

Toby Simpson

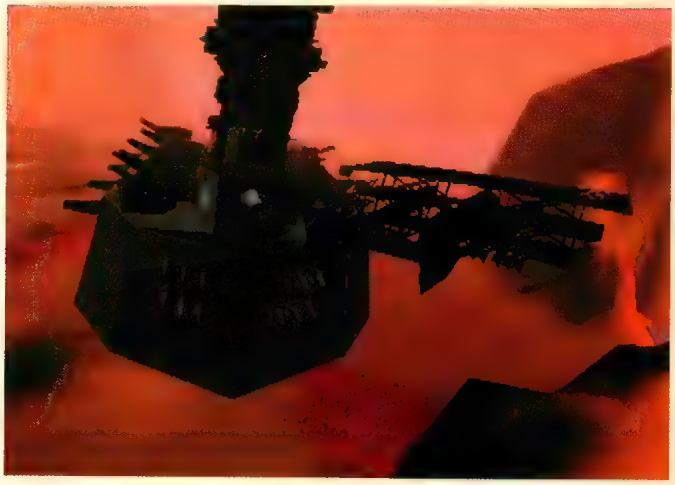
on Millennium on the future of artificial life

"The CyberLife technology developed for *Creatures* has given us the first step towards truly believable intelligent agents. In our new system the distinction between animate and possibly intelligent, adaptive entities and other inanimate artefacts is deliberately blurred. During the next 6-12 months we will complete the first 3D complex systems engine that is capable of modelling both animate, intelligent lifeforms and the usual inanimate objects and environments common to other systems. This technology will allow us to research further into the creation of intelligent systems, and create new games of unparalleled realism. We are currently looking into 3D simulation games, large scale Internet gaming, and a more general class of gaming that can benefit from the use of intelligent autonomous agents. Work is also under way to develop industrial applications based on the CyberLife technology."

Dreadnought Tip

Ocean

Paying a visit to Ocean, we find a very different take on future events, courtesy of *Dreadnought*. The game depicts a future where Queen Victoria still reigns, where exiled European nobles battle against the Allies over an England on Mars, and where the aircraft are powered by elastic bands, in a Leonardo Da Vinci style. Watching the strange craft glide over rugged red landscapes, bombing steam-powered vehicles, we can't help but wish it were possible to actually play the thing rather than passively watch on.



Ultima IX: Ascension

Origin/EA

A role-playing game that uses a 3D polygon engine for something other than first-person fighting. This'll be the ninth in the *Ultima* series then. It's amazing what you find down at Origin's Texas base. This time round Garriott's development team look to have got the balance right between expansive story and leading edge technology, with a fully scaleable and rotatable view of the Avatar's journey through the land of Britannia. Virtues once again play a major part in this dark tale, as does the evil Guardian. The spell system seems familiar enough, but the level of interaction with everything is definitely something they've worked hard at. And from what we can see of the game world, it looks like offering a challenge of typically *Ultima*-like proportions.

combat. *Confirmed Kill* looks to be similarly technically impressive, with a heavy action bias and cool effects like voice transmission for network gamers equipped with microphones. No doubt some colourful language has been floating over the PC GAMER network while reviewing that one.

Flying Nightmares – Eidos

Populous 3

Bullfrog

Suffice to say that *Populous 3* ought to be very good indeed – much more of a leap forward than the slightly disappointing second edition. It's using a substantially altered version of the *Magic Carpet* engine to create an entire planet and pack it with all the special effects that gamers will demand late in 1997. The programmers are just playing around with a globe – zooming in and out and spinning it around – and we're having to work hard to restrain ourselves.

7th Legion – Epic MegaGames

Curley's Adventure – Epic MegaGames

Rebellion – LucasArts

Rebellion

Rebellion

Lower down on the pile we see 21st Century's ***International Aviation Manager***, ***7th Legion*** (Epic MegaGames' take on the real-time arcade wargame genre), and an epic space game from Gametek and Take Two called ***Sensory Overload***. Epic's other release, ***Curly's Adventure***, is also lying on a desk, waiting for review, while the PC is running something called ***Spiritmaster***. It's a beat-'em-up, coded for Acclaim by Probe, the twist with this one being the campaign structure. The adjacent machine, meanwhile, is playing host to ***World Rally Championship***. This must be the globally themed sequel to Europress' *Network Q RAC Rally*, which we had so much fun playing just before we started on this trip. ☛

Sato City

Merit

A jump through time and space to the heart of Tyne & Wear enables us to glimpse Merit's *Sato City* as it nears completion. Taking its cue from *Resident Evil* and *Alone In The Dark*, this futuristic story blends 3D polygon characters and rendered backgrounds to flesh out a story based around China in 2050. In a suitably tech-noir game environment players guide a marine called Skinner around, fighting back against the Sato Corp, who he once worked for. What we see up and running at Merit looks suitably sombre, though its success will lie in how well they've combined the action sequences with an involved plot.

Condemned

Tip for '97

Acclaim

Snooping around Probe's development offices, we stumble upon a whole bunch of testers putting a vaguely *Descent*-ish game through its paces. Now we understand just why Acclaim's Simon Smithwright described it as "looking more like a game of the Nintendo 64's graphical quality". It really is very fast and detailed, and the design looks to be really aimed at network play. Wonder how well it'll work in one-player mode. We'll have to take a closer look at it when we return to what was the present.

Terracide

Eidos

Another leftover from last year, *Terracide* is now finally ready for unveiling here in the autumnal months of '97. Its 65,000 colour 3D engine isn't quite so unique anymore, but the visuals still look particularly lovely. And we can now see that the developers have incorporated plenty of interior locations to complement the low-level flight and deep-space combat. It's hard to tell without getting our hands on the thing just how effective the much mooted artificial intelligence routines are, though the care taken to realistically model the solar system and all the planetary paths and gravity effects that come with it certainly appear to have been worthwhile.

Charles Cecil

of Revolution on graphic adventures

"Two years ago it was considered by many opinion leaders, particularly in America, that graphic adventures were about to metamorphose – and turn into 'Interactive Movies'. At the time, Revolution had the choice of going down the FMV route, or choosing to evolve rather then revolutionise the genre. We believed that the loss of gameplay that was inevitable with FMV-based games must mean that this genre would be short lived. We therefore chose the latter.

"But I do believe that we are still in the very early stages of 'interactive' storytelling and there is still much to learn. The rules to writing a good story, however, are universal – regardless of whether it is told via a computer game, a book or a film. And so there is no excuse if the storytelling aspect of a game is poor. The battleground for graphic adventures over the next few years will be fought in the way that they are displayed and the intelligence given to non-player characters. Artificial intelligence is a concept that many developers, including ourselves, have devoted considerable resources to exploring. AI has not, as yet, been successfully applied to adventure games. This will change. There is scope for considerable improvements in display, with 3D technology offering the most significant advances. The day will come in three or four years when 3D real-time generated characters look as good as hand-drawn sprites. With our main constraints, namely memory and viewing angles, no longer restraining us, there will be many opportunities opened up which didn't exist before. And, of course, there is the 'grail' of this genre – multi-player adventure gameworlds – but that is a long way off."

GT Racing

Ocean

Materialising in the foyer of Ocean's offices we watch as a load of boxes bearing the *GT Racing 97* logo are wheeled out the door. That'll be the 3D *Sega Rally* style game, developed by *Rebellion*. We recall seeing it in action back at the start of the previous year, and how slick it looked then. Let's hope they've been working hard to keep it up to date – *Sega Rally* came out about six months ago, after all. Or at least it did if you're standing around in the cold autumn chill of Manchester.

International Aviation – 21st Century

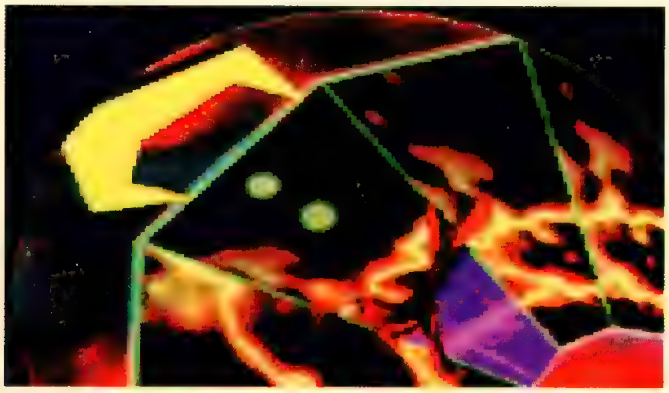
Catching a glimpse of a PC GAMER issue dated September 1997, we glean some details on an NFL approved American football game from Gametek. This looks like the one that's been licensed to Sega and Konami for Saturn and PlayStation versions. There's also a review in there of a new game from the developers who did *Quarantine* and *Road Warriors* – that must be Mercenary. Alas, the future incarnation of our art editor slams the issue shut before we can see any more, so we mooch over to the other side of the office, where we listen in on a phone conversation with Virgin's press department. It seems they'll be sending out review copies of LucasArts' Star War strategy game ***Rebellion*** today, along with the new creation by ex-Bullfrog boy Sean Cooper.

At which point Psygnosis' amiable PR bloke walks into the office, clutching finished copies of ***Elric***, ***Alphastorm*** and ***The Island Of Doctor Moreau***. The latter is obviously timed to coincide with the

Tempest X3

Interplay

Punching in the co-ordinates for Interplay's abode proves to be very fortuitous. For here we find a second *Tempest* sequel in action. This one looks just as manic and single-minded as its predecessors, though the addition of new enemies, weapons and two-player co-operative and competitive options should please those who found *Tempest* just a little too retro. We can hear what sounds like a brand new techno soundtrack, and those graphics have been suitably upgraded without sacrificing the abstract nature of it all too much.



World Cup 98

Electronic Arts

EA promised a *FIFA*-style game supported by a World Cup licence, and we can see that's exactly what they've delivered. The ability to play matches from the entire World Cup tournament, rather than the usual couple of months' worth of matches is certainly neat, making that '98' tag just a little more pertinent. Mmm, maybe we could jump further forward in time and see just who will win the next World Cup. Well, we've got a pretty good idea who it won't be.

Rally

Virgin

After eagerly waiting for King Of The Jungle's potentially excellent 3D car racing game for much of 1996, it's handy to be able to jump forward a few more months to see what the finished thing looks like. Freeform racing environment, stupidly detailed cars, and some pretty rugged driving models are all now in place. Don't you just wish we could show you what it's all about?

remake of the original movie interpretation of HG Wells' horror story. *Down In the Dumps* creators Haiku have handled the real-time 3D, rendered image-based design for this adventure game, so hopefully our future selves are about to discover something more impressive than Psygnosis' previous movie endeavours – remember *Dracula? Alphastorm* is handily being demoed as we watch. It's a 3D science fiction game with lots of deep space combat, trading, and conversations with other characters.

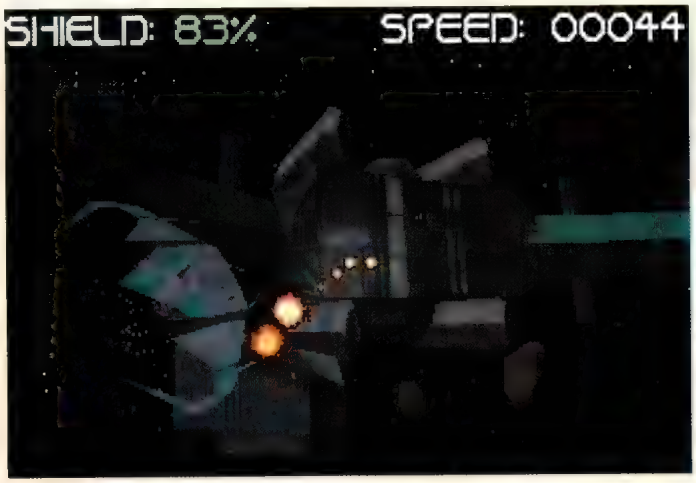
Leaving our future selves to carry on with the demonstration, we continue our scouting of the PC GAMER offices and happen upon a finished copy of Hasbro's ***Beast Wars***. This is the one based on the kid's TV show, with the Maximals fighting the Predacons. It's written by British developer Rebellion, if we remember rightly, who should've also completed work on ***Devil's Own*** for Microsoft around about now. Wonder how they fare in the post *Command & Conquer* strategy field with that one.

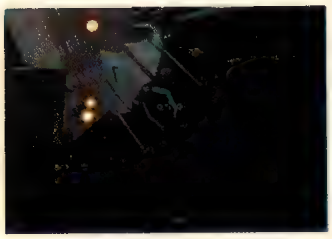
It looks like SSI have been busy as usual – there's ***Panzer General 97***, ***Aden Magic*** and ***Aden Quest*** all sitting in our Editor's in tray awaiting review. This 1997 incarnation of He Who Must Be Obeyed is busy finishing playing Mirage's ***3D Pool*** game. And what's this getting booted up now? Some fumbling with CDs and installation delays later and the logo for ***Quest For Glory 5: Dragon Fire*** appears on the screen. It looks like the usual Sierra fantasy setting, for sure. And the combination of puzzles, adventuring and combat is somewhat familiar. But *Dragon Fire* certainly has better presentation than any of the previous *Quest For Glory* episodes. This one's got proper 3D characters and a decent landscape system, for a start. If only we could loiter here a while longer and make sure it plays rather better than its primitive predecessor. But we can hear the next season calling, and so wave goodbye to our unseeing selves, give the big red button a good whack, and get ready to re-appear three months down the line.

The Tenth Planet

Bethesda/Virgin

Had this one come out when the whole Independence Day hullabaloo was in full swing, it would've been unstoppable. Now we're not so sure. But as our time machine materialises in a toilet down the corridor from the darkened room where Bethesda's lead programmers run some final tests, we must confess to feeling quite excited anyway. There are no real graphical surprises here – we've been getting glimpses of it for the last couple of years, after all. But with that script from Id creators Centropolis and the smoothness of the 3D engine, it looks likely that *The Tenth Planet* may just conceivably have been worth the wait. No mean feat.





Last stop... Winter 1997

Quake 2

GT

This has got to be one of the biggest games of the year. We recall Id's Mike Wilson, when he told us how *Quake 2* would "share nothing with its predecessor except the technology, featuring all new weapons, graphics, environments, story (yes, story), and monsters". With the widespread use of 3D cards, MMX and the incredible Pentium Pro 330 it really is looking rather nice.

HAVING DARTED ALL over space and time to bring you the low down on some of the more exciting games, we decide to do a bulk Christmas shop for the rest of the goodies. Tapping in the special destination code for

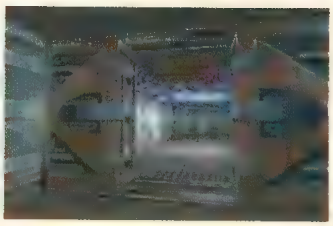
Hamley's store in London, circa December 1997, we strap ourselves in and prepare for the final jump.

Outside it's dark and frosty, but as our time machine materialises here (and it looks strangely at home actually) the aisles are teaming with parents in search of Christmas gifts and kids in search of all the games next December's edition of PC GAMER has urged them to buy. Up ahead a load of PlayStations are connected up to unfeasibly slim television sets - so that's what flat screen looks like. They all seem to be running very similar first-person 3D shoot-'em-ups of one description or another. No change there, then. And directly below we can see row after row of PC games

Prey

GT

Zipping around the future like this sometimes creates a sense of déjà vu, particularly when there are so many *Quake* and *Command & Conquer* wannabes. But there's no mistaking the game we're currently watching 3D Realms put the finishing touches to. While we can't quite see whether they've cracked the challenge of doing something new with the gameplay side of first-person shoot-'em-ups, there's no doubting how fine *Prey* looks. The science fiction-styled levels look suitably gloomy, what with all those clever shadowing effects (ooh, look at the soft edges on the shadows!) and light source techniques. And we'll be blowed if the whole of the 3D Realms office doesn't seem to be testing out that multi player mode, stomping around the levels, wielding huge amounts of firepower, and making use of features like the quick lookaround thingy. Lucky blighters, we'll all have to wait months for the privilege.



Cowpokes

Mirage

There's tinsel hanging from the monitors, and an advent calendar stuck onto one of the rendering machines, but the coders and artists are still working away into the night here at our latest stop-off point, Mirage Central. And with good reason. They've got high hopes for their *Cowpokes* project, and are beavering away at it in an attempt to get it ready for Christmas. Looking closer, this strangely titled creation reveals itself to be a pretty snazzy looking platform game, albeit one in 3D with a *Mario*-style moving camera viewpoint. It all looks like it may be rather amusing, too – incorporating all sorts of knockabout jokes and plundering all sorts of Western clichés. We can just about hear the programmers mumbling to each other, discussing bits of code that we can't even begin to understand. We do hear them mention something about a new 3D physics-based graphics system, though. Sounds impressive, whatever it is.

Redemption

Philips

It seems like only yesterday that Cranberry's Jon Ritman told us how "*Redemption* re-uses *QAD*'s landscape engine, but also features a polygon engine for interior scenes. The idea is to have a main character who can walk around, and get into a variety of vehicles, each of which has a different control method to learn. It's also possible to go into buildings, which is where the polygonal system is used, with a new version of our polar sprouts system handling the characters." And how we recall Jon telling us how the game would feature puzzles in a way not unlike his classic isometric games *Head Over Heels* and *Batman*, but would be viewed by "sticking a camera in the corner of the room, so it's real 3D, but the view works in a similar way to isometric Spectrum games. The difference is that now we can tip the floor, turn the room upside down, and so create a whole new style of puzzles." We've got very good memories, obviously.

for us to scoop into our baskets.

And friends and spouses of PC games players will be lonely this Christmas judging by the amount of stuff on show here. There are a whole bunch of Acclaim games, including their conversion of the ***Magic: The Gathering*** coin-op, something called ***Asylum***, and – yes! – ***Virus 2000***, a sequel to David Braben's legendary Amiga game *Virus*.

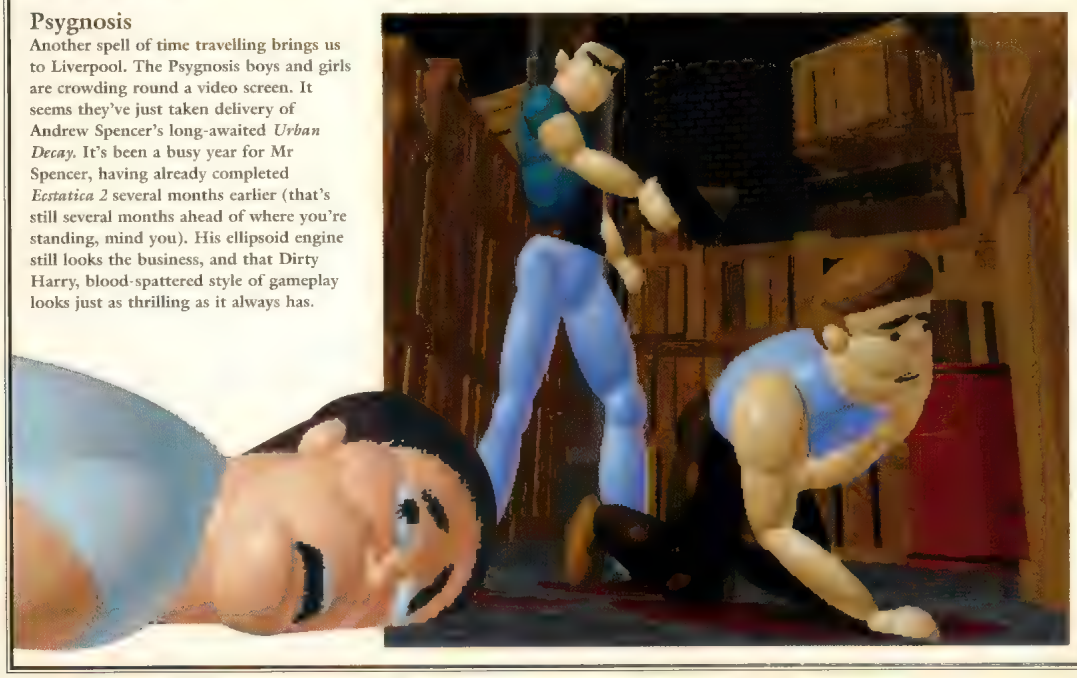
Bill Roper

"1997 will bring a new generation of real-time strategy games. The popularity of games like *Warcraft II* and *Command & Conquer* has sparked a new interest in the genre. Multi-player options will continue to be important to a game's perceived value, and companies will need to explore new methods of offering easy access to head-to-head games over the Internet. Our solution is our new Battle.net service, which allows one-click access to multi-player games over the Internet for free. Another challenge is the ability to design a game that appeals to all levels of gamers. In the past, there was a core group of advanced gamers, but now, there is a much broader range of skill levels. Companies must be able to construct games that provide a high level of challenge for seasoned gamers, while also making the experience accessible to novices."

Urban Decay

Psygnosis

Another spell of time travelling brings us to Liverpool. The Psygnosis boys and girls are crowding round a video screen. It seems they've just taken delivery of Andrew Spencer's long-awaited *Urban Decay*. It's been a busy year for Mr Spencer, having already completed *Ecstatica 2* several months earlier (that's still several months ahead of where you're standing, mind you). His ellipsoid engine still looks the business, and that Dirty Harry, blood-spattered style of gameplay looks just as thrilling as it always has.



Citizens

Cranberry Source

When we first learned that Cranberry Source were taking over development of MicroProse's uncompleted *Citizens* project, we had to ask ourselves why. A few months down the line and everything becomes clear. Jon Ritman has redesigned much of the game, and really made the most of the idea of controlling people via emotions. The finished game has greatly expanded on the ability to poke thoughts into the various inhabitants' heads, so that using concepts such as lust, curiosity, or the need for certain objects now become the tools with which players must direct the actions of any number of charges. And with a proper financial system, a much smoother control interface, and less generalised characters (look, somebody's trying to get that vicar to go down the betting shop!) the potential of the 'sim people' concept has finally been realised. But how does this all work as a game? We'll all have to wait another year to find that one out.

Tomb Raider II

Eidos

After trouncing most of the competition last Christmas it's no surprise to find Core working on *Tomb Raider II*. From the quick glimpses at the screen we can catch, it looks like Lara Croft and her various assets are all intact, plus there are new outside sections, weather and engine improvements. We're definitely looking forward to playing this.

Then there's ***Machines***, also from Acclaim. Looking closer at the box blurb, we discover it's a complex-looking empire-building game – sort of *Command & Conquer* in 3D. A bit of the text goes on to describe how it's possible to play over a network and have your forces defend themselves when going off-line. How bizarre.

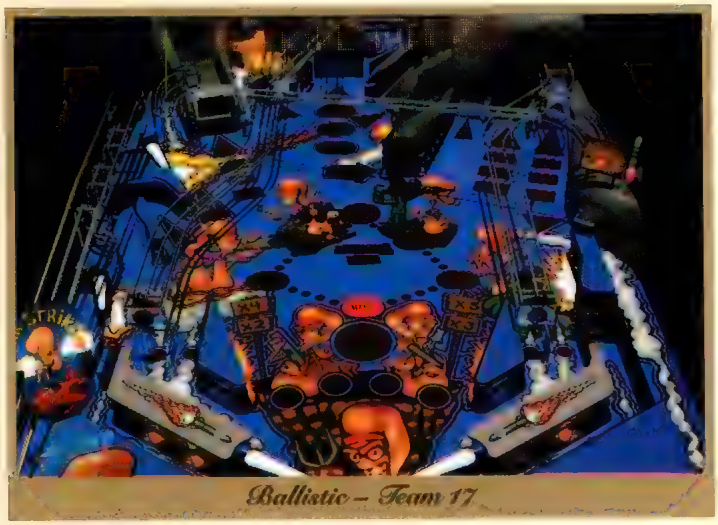
A whole heap of SSI stuff from Mindscape loiters further down the aisle, with titles like ***Siege Of Stormhaven***, ***Ship Of The Line*** and ***Computer Ambush*** adorning the boxes. Oh look, they've got a sequel to the excellent *Warhammer* – something called ***Dark Omen***. And that looks rather like a new flight sim from those *SU27* lads. All very deep and involving, no doubt. A little further along a young man is standing at the counter with his copy of ***Star Trek: Generations*** from MicroProse. Wonder if it was the inclusion of voice acting from William Shatner, Whoopi Goldberg, Malcolm McDowell and Patrick Stewart that decided his purchase. Or it could have been the way the game mixes space combat with first-person planet exploration sequences.

Moving onto the next shelf of new PC titles, we see a beat-'em-up from Mirage called ***Brawl***. It seems this one is in 3D, using the same physics-based graphics engine used for *Cowpokes*. And beside that is Psygnosis' ***G Police*** – oh how we remember waiting for the charms of its city-based helicopter missions for much of '96 and early '97.

MiG Alley

Empire

It looks as though Rod and his hardy team of flight sim enthusiasts have just about put *MiG Alley* to bed, after a long year of re-coding their *Flying Corps* landscape engine and perfecting enemy AI routines. The fruit of their labours looks mighty fine indeed, what with those low-level missions working as part of a flexible Korean War campaign, complete with P51s, F80 Shooting Stars and the F86 'Mig Killers' darting around the place. Using satellite photography to map the tricky Korean terrain seems to have paid dividends, too, and the 12-player head-to-head mode is likely to excite network players. The future sure looks bright for Rowan.



Ballistic – Team 17

A little further along and the shelves are awash with Sega's ***Sonic 3D Blast***. Now that's a surprise.

Team 17 have a slice of the shelf space in the next aisle, with 3D rendered pinball bash ***Ballistic*** and an Internet capable ***Worms*** sequel tempting the happy shoppers. Listening in on a conversation between two long-haired youths, it transpires that the Sheffield publishers have also recently launched a whole load of Internet-based games, including a quiz game, a cut-down version of *Euromanager*, called ***Interactive Football League***, and Net editions of ***Arcade Pool*** and ***Profits Warning***. Guess this Internet lark might have caught on in the crazy, mixed-up world of 1997.

Down to the last aisle of PC stuff, and it seems Virgin have this section sewn up. Which is no surprise given the fact they've got Westwood's long-awaited ***Blade Runner*** here, flanked by something called ***Dead Space*** and another by the name of ***Kiss Of Death***.

Finally seeing *Blade Runner* boxed and on the shelves is a truly heart-popping moment, especially considering that it has just graced the cover of last month's PC GAMER after all the wait. PCG

Ares Rising

Cyberdreams

More time displacement trickery over in the USA brings our machine to a stop in the Cyberdreams offices, where they're just shipping out boxes of their latest release to the game stores. This must be the title from the *Privateer* developers that Cyberdreams' Elizabeth Olsen told us about. When we first heard about elements like the 3D space combat, the ability to hire wingmen, buy better spaceships, and the use of numerous missions to tell a story about a mercenary-for-hire and the mysterious Micomicon Device, our thoughts immediately went to *The Darkening*. Taking a look at the screenshots on one of the visible boxes, its SVGA texture-mapped 3D looks rather fetching, and there's some blurb about eight-way multi-player and Internet modes. Not bad.

Spy vs Spy 3D

GT

When we began our time-travelling journey in the dark winter of '96 this was just a twinkle on GT's release schedule, and here we are, watching copies of the game fly from the shelves, a mere year down the line. And fly from the shelves they should – this is a new treatment of the classic trap-based Commodore 64 runaround, after all. And that 3D system doesn't half work well, with the strangely angular shapes of Mad magazine's favourite cartoon undercover agents. But enough future reminiscing (if such a thing is possible), onto our next destination.

Ion Storm

John Romero/Tom Hall

Finally tracking down the correct spatial co-ordinates for a visit to Ion Storm, we arrive only to discover that ex Id men John Romero and Tom Hall have already finished their work for the year and scarpered off home for Christmas. If only we'd set the time dial for a few months earlier. Perhaps if we snoop around, we'll get some clues. One of the monitors seems to have been left on, displaying a rather clever looking 3D strategy game – a real-time one, if we're not mistaken. Mmm, there are a few notes lying around about some kind of first-person action-based role-playing game, too. Sounds interesting. And over in the corner there's a Post-it note that mentions something about another role-playing game, this one in a 3D Final Fantasy-style. All very intriguing; what can it all mean?

Sentinel Returns

Psygnosis

Ah ha. Final testing is being carried out on the sequel to Sir Geoffrey Crammond's classic first-person puzzle game, *The Sentinel*. John Cook of the ubiquitous Cranberry Source has been at the helm of this one (under the guise of No Name Games), with *Zoop* developers, Hookstone, handling the actual programming lark. And from what we can see, his design looks like it may well have done justice to Sir Geoffrey's original, almost chess-like concept. But then, Mr Cook did spend something like five years convincing him that this would be much more than a cash-in.

Tip

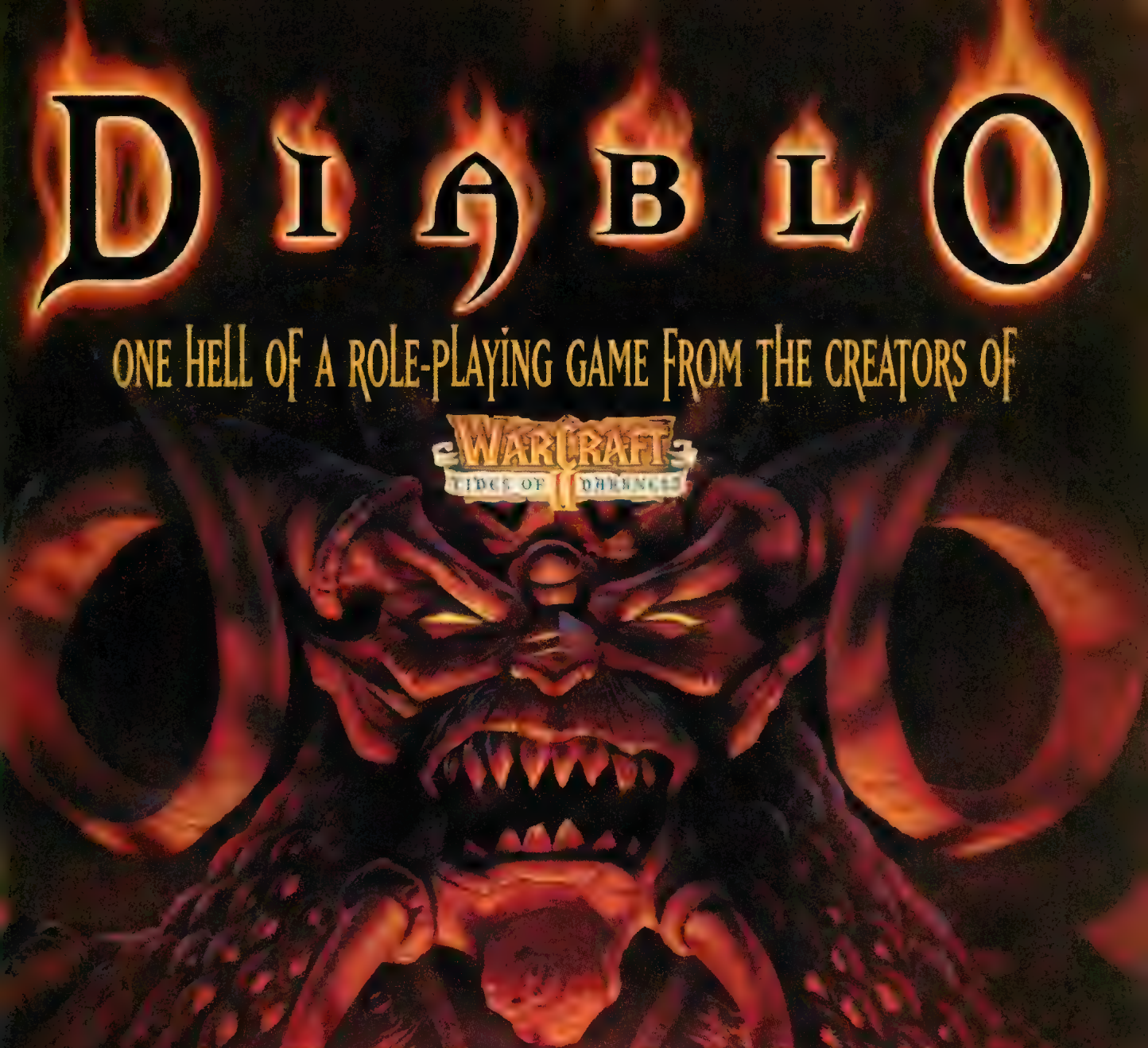
And so it ends

Entering our trusty time machine for the final time, the assembled might of PC GAMER sets the dials for December 1996 and returns to more familiar times and climes. The luxurious surroundings that have served us so well will soon be replaced by the cramped confines of our Bath offices. The time machine will be disassembled, the antique furniture returned under the 14-day money back guarantee we negotiated, and the Windows 95 power plant that controlled it all replaced in the PC so that we might play Red Alert once again. But most importantly we now live with the satisfaction that by compiling this definitive guide we have enlightened every PC GAMER reader about the joys that await them in 1997. We have a fine year ahead of us all.

DIABLO

ONE HELL OF A ROLE-PLAYING GAME FROM THE CREATORS OF

WARCRAFT II
TIDES OF DARKNESS



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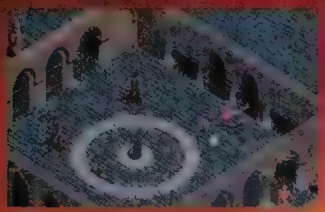

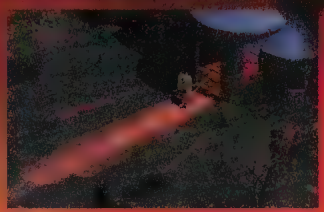

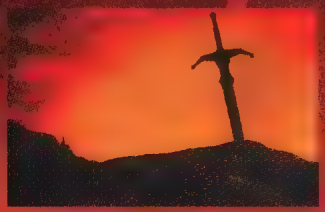

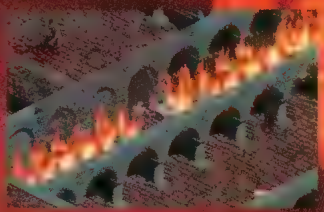

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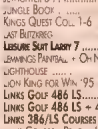

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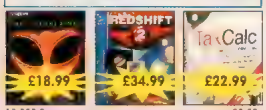

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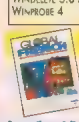

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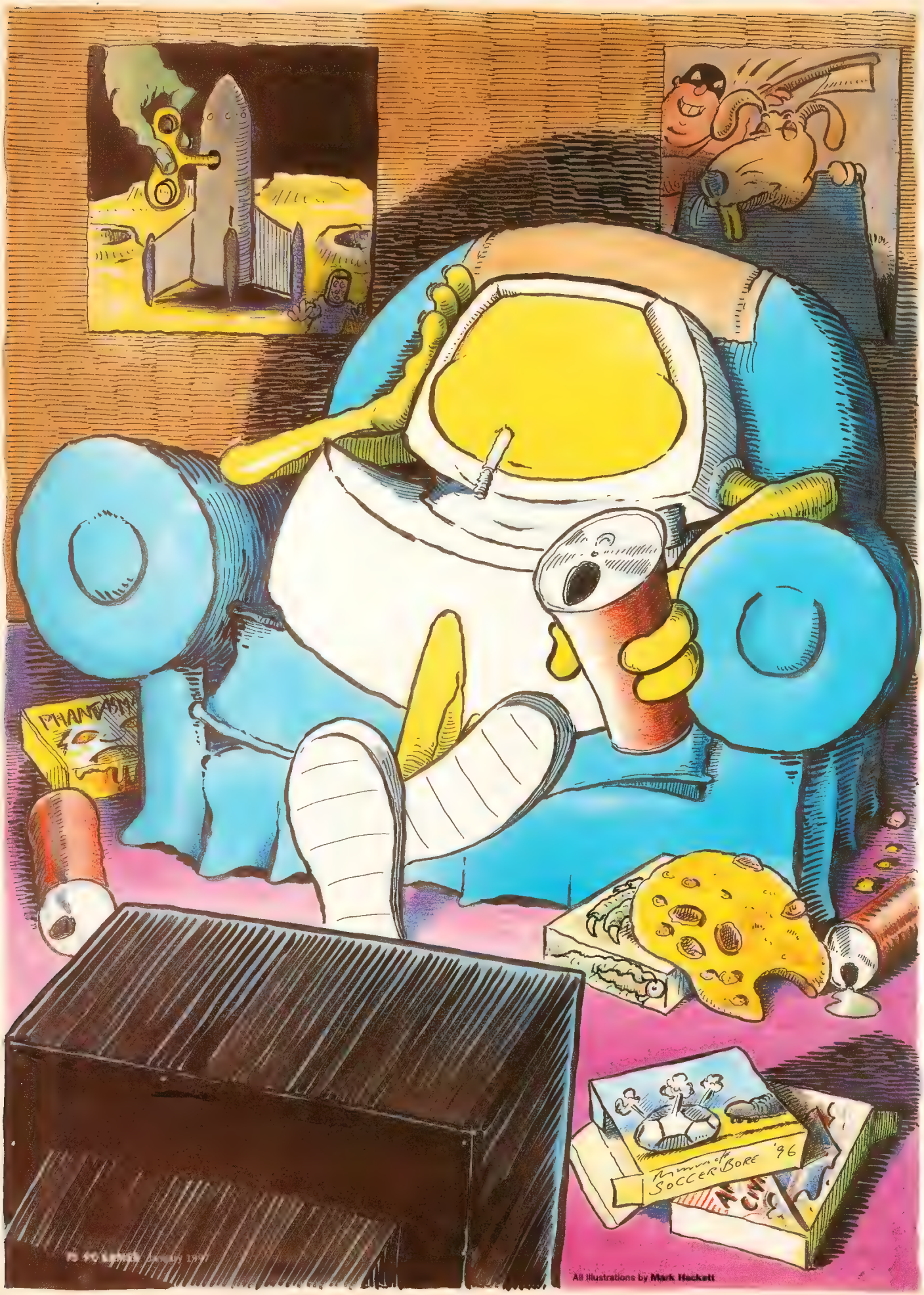


All illustrations by Mark Heckett

Getting into shape: PC resolutions

It is a fact that 1997 will be the year the PC comes of age. But although the world's most unlikely games machine has come a long way during the last decade, its quest for perfection is far from over. PC GAMER dons its electronic jogging pants and suggests a fitness program for today's PC.

By SIMON COX

AS WE SAT AROUND THE PCG office, munching the last of our microwavable 'Turkey Odyssey', it occurred to us that no-one had seen the office PC for some time. One minute, he was happily splashing about in a pool of Baileys, and the next he was gone. Vanished without a trace. We weren't unduly concerned; he'd probably just been stolen, sold to someone named 'Jez' and was more than likely to be rattling about in the back of a Ford Transit somewhere near the services on the M4 – happy in the knowledge that he'd finally escaped his life as guinea-pig for a thousand terrible games, all of which reconfigured his system files (the human equivalent, he once whined, of a strip-search) at every opportunity. Then Steve heard a whimper.

It came from the cupboard.

As we turned the handle, we heard a cry.

"Don't open the door. I don't want anyone to see me like this. I just can't stand it any more."

Our PC seemed to be having a nervous breakdown. We thought, at first, that it was just another Windows incident. Ever since we'd installed Windows 95, the PC had been acting up, displaying all the symptoms of a manic depressive. One minute he'd be flying along, with not a care in the world, running games for DOS 2.0 without so much as a bleep, while the next, he'd balk at any game that required anything to do with sound, video memory, the keyboard, joysticks or save games.

"I know what you're thinking. It's not just another Windows 95 incident," said the cupboard.

"I'm fed up with being a PC. It's rubbish. I'm fat, I'm slow, I keep forgetting things and look like the back end of a bus. A big grey one with no windows – and I'm a con, as everyone keeps telling me."

This was serious.

"But that's not what we think," said Steve, tactfully. Then Mark blew it.

"Well, I must admit we were thinking of trading you in for a couple of PlayStations – oh, and a holiday in the Caribbean. And a new car, actually, and perhaps a bit of a night out for the team, and..."

We silenced him with *The War College* instruction manual. He began to choke.

"I'm staying in this cupboard until I feel well enough to move. And don't try and tempt me out with *Tomb Raider*, either. We haven't seen *Phantasmagoria 2*, yet, and I know it's out there somewhere. What do you think I am, stupid?"

"No," we replied, not entirely convincingly. Then we had an idea.

"Why don't we write a list of things you can do to improve yourself? New Year's resolutions, if you like."

We heard his hard drive buzz for a few a seconds.

"Deal. But I'm still not coming out yet."

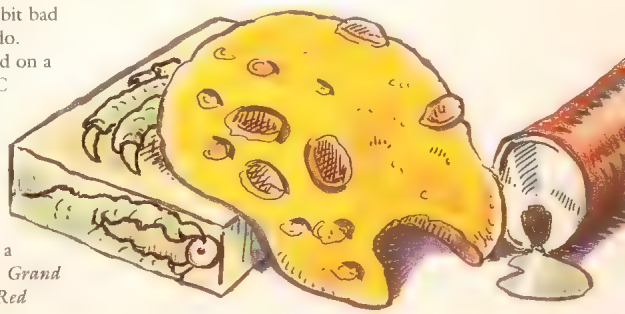
"Rather than shouting 'who ate all the pies' as you walk down the street, you'll find your PlayStation chums begging you for a game as stunning as 3Dfx *Tomb Raider*."

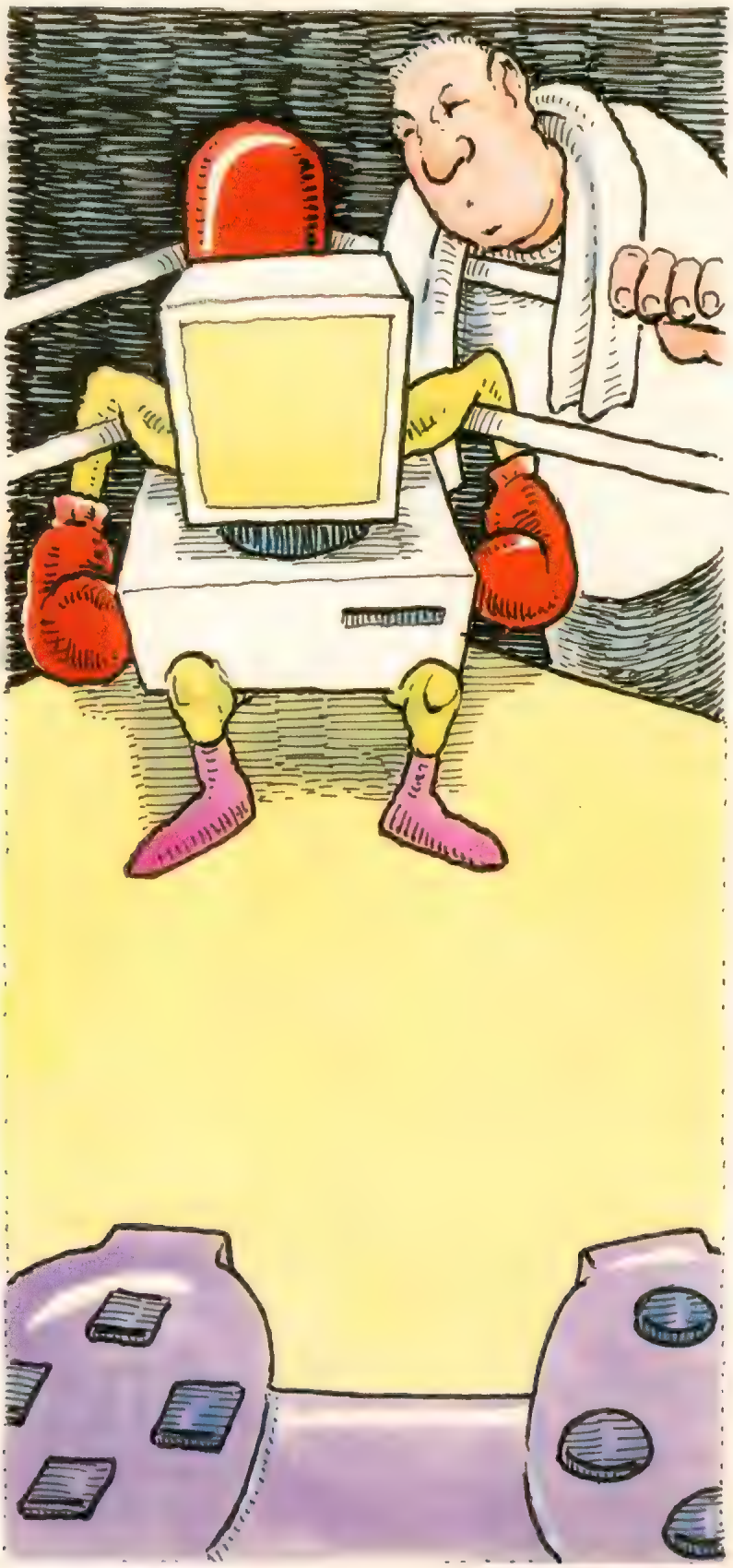
1. Improve diet

Let's look at your diet this past year. You've had very little healthy intake. We feel a bit bad about it, but there's not much we can do. According to our records, you've existed on a diet almost entirely composed of the PC equivalent of burgers and chips. Month after month, developers have served up sloppy console conversions (in a strange, brown gravy), a menu-full of *Command & Conquer* rip-offs and a seemingly endless tray of half-baked point-and-click adventures. There were a few choice cuts of meat here and there: *Grand Prix 2, Quake, Command & Conquer: Red Alert* and *Warcraft 2*. They've helped a bit, but you only have to look at the bloated size of your hard drive to see that you need to cut out the junk food.

Lucky for you, the PC market has changed considerably in 1996. Developers can no longer churn out sub-standard titles, as even these can approach the thick end of £1 million to produce. As Neil Young of Virgin in the US said recently, "the market is hit-driven". In other words, if your game's a turkey, then people won't buy it. It sounds simple, but it's taken the market a long time to mature. Only the very best titles will make money, and publisher release schedules are shrinking accordingly. Hopefully, your hard drive beer-belly should follow suit. So how will the developers improve your diet in the new year?

With the arrival of the 3D accelerator cards, your games should begin to approach the graphics quality already enjoyed by millions of next generation console owners. In fact,





rather than shouting "who ate all the pies" as you walk down the street, you'll find your PlayStation chums (complete with their 'dance music' and 'street' fashions) begging you for a game as stunning as 3Dfx *Tomb Raider* or Epic's amazing *Quake*-you-like, *Unreal*. DID, the master chefs that cooked up the princely *TFX: EF2000* will bring *TFX3* to the feast, with a light spicy sauce in the guise of a special edition *EF2000* for 3Dfx.

Then there's the eagerly awaited, mouth-watering sequels to look forward to: *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* and *Dark Forces 2: Jedi Knight*, from LucasArts, as well as *Monkey Island 3* and *X-COM Apocalypse*. David Braben, the genius behind the classic *Elite* (and the er... not so classic *Elite* sequels), is also cooking up something special (though he won't reveal any of the ingredients at this early stage). John Romero, ex-Id master chef, and his new meals-on-wheels company, Dream Designs, have licensed the *Quake* engine and are promising something as revolutionary as *Doom* was. Peter Molyneux, who single-handedly invented the god sim (which puts him up there with Lord Sandwich in our book) has also formed a new company that is rumoured to be called Lionhead. All of this adds up to a fine feast, with very little fat and plenty of good, healthy gameplay. You'll still have late nights and chow down the odd poisoned pill, but, as our 1997 preview shows, the G-plan diet should see you lead a more healthy life then ever before.

2. Go to the gym

We'll get you a membership to that new health club up on the hill overlooking the valley. It's no more running the crusty pavements alone at night for you. Massages, hydrospas and soft towels will follow hard pumping iron. It's no good getting rid of all those sloppy games if you can't tone up afterwards. You can turn your Peewee Herman 66MHz 486 chip into an Arnold Schwarzenegger P200 MMX processor. Instead of struggling to handle all those multimedia and games applications, wheeling them about in the silicon equivalent of one of those tartan shopping bags on wheels, you can balance the lot on your head and sprint up the nearest flight of steps, jogging on the spot at the top and waving your arms in the air.

Think of the MMX chip as a good dose of steroids. Sure, if you were competing fairly with the consoles, you'd make do with your standard Pentium (it is, after all, three times faster than the PlayStation's puny 33MHz CPU). But all's fair in love, war and entertainment, so why not? In the special effects stakes, those expensive fashion accessories are winning hands down. It says on the back of the MMX bottle that each chip contains 57 new instructions – a bit like vitamins – which help accelerate both 3D and 2D graphics, video, sound, communications and even speech recognition, so you'll understand it when we swear at you. That means that you can take advantage of any game especially written with the MMX chip in mind. *Unreal*, from Epic, should provide the ideal opportunity for you to show off your new muscles, with real-time lighting and shadows, alpha blending (transparency effects such as fog

and distance fade) and 16.7 million colours, which you can be especially smug about as not even human beings can see that many at once. You'll have muscles in places where we don't even have places.

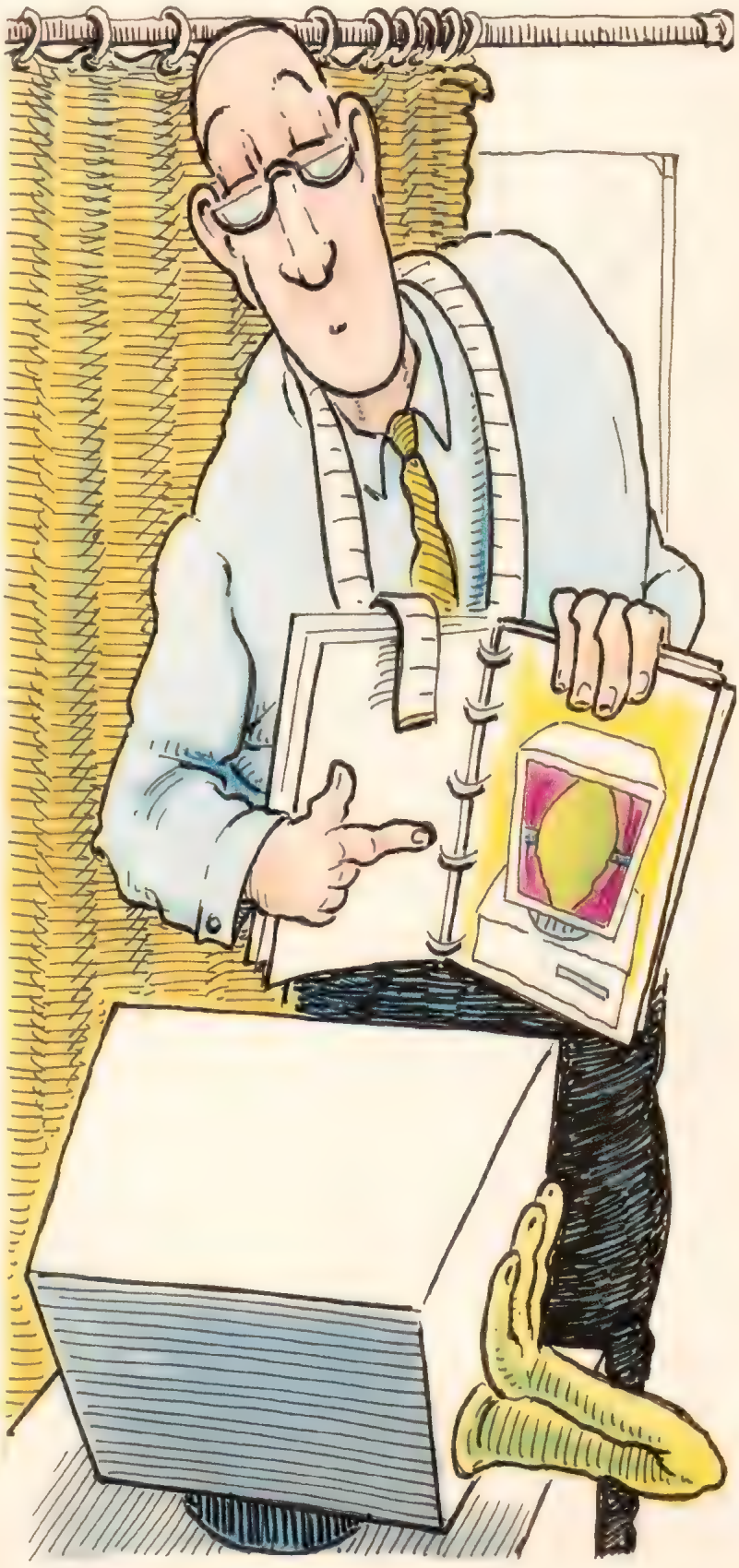
Intel, the Sanatogen of the PC world, have a few more little helpers up their Aran jumpers. We've seen a secret document that holds the plans for AGP, the 'Advanced Graphics Port', which allows 3D accelerators to skip the B-road PCI bus and travel along a veritable Autobahn to your main memory. You'll never have to worry about clogged arteries again. No sooner will you build a polygon, than it will be out the door, down the road and onto the big screen before you can say *'Quake'*. Oh, and Mark's bought you this Bill Gates 'Billionairobics' workout video to help you get into the spirit of things. It's Betamax, though.

3. Buy some new clothes

Let's face it, you look about as cool as Barry Took. You're as grey as a geography trip to the Brecon Beacons and you buy your clothes from BHS. No wonder you've never had a girlfriend, been asked to a party or offered a lift in a black stretch limo full of women with electric guitars. But we know you'd like to, so we've been looking around for a new wardrobe for you. We called up Sony, Toshiba and IBM, and they all promised to send a bloke round to measure you up for a few new outfits. We showed them a picture of you, and they all laughed, spilling their double-espressos all over their Gucci loafers. What was it they said? That you had a 'parochial charm'.

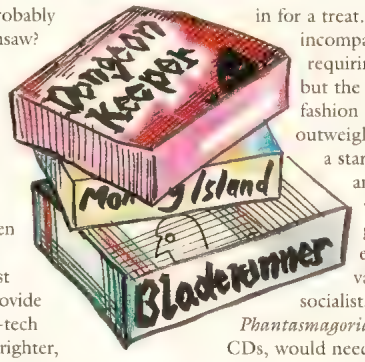
Taking a leaf out of Apple's book, the big PC manufacturers are putting a lot of time, effort and money into the appearance of their wares. Now that you're supposed to be replacing the VCR as the quality home entertainment package of choice, they've decided that you need to look less like office furniture and more like an object of desire, less of a Fergie and more of a Farrah Fawcett. What this means is that you can expect a choice of colours and finishes – a bit like a new car. Matt black will be particularly trendy (although, according to fashion gurus, "brown is the new black"), as will bright white. No more grey and beige for you. You could end up looking like Toshiba's trendy Infinia PC – which would be more at home in Bladerunner than The Money Program, sporting (round of applause) a minimalist moulded black case, ergonomic keyboard and monitor-mounted black hi-fi speakers and a television remote. IBM, after years of churning out some of the ugliest PCs in the world, will also come good in '97 with their revolutionary new Aptiva 'S' series.

'Big Blue' have done some market research and have discovered that users are tired of having no desk space, as their giant PC towers take up so much room. In a world where just about every other electronic device, from stereos to Nintendo's Game Boy, is getting smaller, you, the PC, seem to be gaining weight. To solve the problem, the Aptiva S is split into three sections. There's ☛



the monitor, the tower and then something that looks a bit like a hi-fi separate – a 'media console'. This console provides a link between the keyboard and the tower and contains the floppy and CD-ROM drives. It sits beneath the monitor, and has a footprint no bigger than the base of the monitor itself. The tower can then be put away on the floor or in a cupboard (or a skip, depending on your mood) and linked to the rest of the system via a 6ft cable. This leaves the user plenty of desk space for the keyboard, mouse mat, mug of tea and a complete set of Encyclopaedia Britannica.

You'd need some pretty radical surgery, but we could probably do it. Where's that chainsaw?



Of course, if you really want to provide a decent games experience, you'll need a bigger, flatter screen, to compete with those upstarts, the so-called super-consoles. Flat-screen technology has been developing apace this past year and 1997 should provide you with a number of hi-tech monitors to give you a brighter, sharper picture and an altogether more sophisticated appearance. The Fujitsu ErgoPro leads the way, with its perfectly flat screen (providing a flicker-free resolution of up to 1024x768) and slim-line-profile (it has no tube). Okay, so it costs about £2,500, but you get what you pay for. Of course, you can't mix and match – the trend is definitely towards integrated designs, to the point of actually grafting the monitor onto your body, a bit like the old Apple Mac Classics.

And the motives behind all this? Simple, the PC market has changed. You're no longer the favourite hang-out for nerds and 'cyber-punks'. You're for people who know their Chateaux Margeaux from their Blue Nun and for families with children with permanently fixed grins, repeatedly in awe at the profusion of musical notes, guitars, aircraft and marble busts of Beethoven that spring from their incredible multimedia PCs whenever they pass within 15 feet of the monitor. Lucky for you, people can't be bothered with taking you to bits and poking around with screwdrivers anymore. If you want to make it through the next 12 months, you'll have to look and feel friendly and easy to use. When Sony, the people who brought us the Walkman, and the PlayStation begin designing for you, then that shouldn't be a problem. Of course, if Volvo decide to get in on the act, then you may as well stay in the cupboard.

4. Accessorise

It's all very well sorting you out with a new body, but if you want to turn heads in Dixons, then your going to need a few fashion accessories. We know you've already got some but, frankly, they clash. Get rid of those bobble hats, leg warmers and one-piece 'lounge suits' and embrace the haute couture of 3D graphics cards, DVD CD-ROM and force-feedback joysticks. Believe us when we say that it's for the best.

For the graphics accelerator, we reckon that the 3Dfx cards are the ones to plump for at the moment. Based on the Voodoo Graphics chip-set, they cost between around £200 and will give all the games you run detailed textures, faster polygons and console-style effects such as fogging, hazing, MIP-mapping, anti-aliasing and perspective-corrected texturing. The chip's being specifically supported by more developers than any other and will certainly help you to cost even more next year.

As for DVD (Digital Video Disc), you're in for a treat. This new CD-ROM format is incompatible with your old drive, requiring a dedicated DVD drive, but the benefits (not to say the fashion kudos) should more than outweigh these minor irritations. For a start, they can store between 4.7 and 17 Gigabytes of data, which is ideal for multimedia games, as well as storing the entire lifetime's work of vaudeville comedian and socialist, Karl Marx. Sierra's *Phantasmagoria*, which currently requires six CDs, would need only one DVD CD-ROM, making it much easier to dispose of in the microwave or, if you're an American, the 'garbage compacter'. How useful. The increased storage also means that you'll be able to double up as a cinema, as Hollywood begin releasing movies on DVD. Don't blame us, though, if you only get used for European 'art movies', Jane Fonda's Fondue Party Workout and Forrest Gump 6 – 'I May Be Stupid, But I'm Loaded'. And there's no doubt that writeable CD players will also be making cheap appearances soon and that can only be good news for all those music CD compilations you've always wanted to make.

Force feedback joysticks will not only look fashionably technical, they'll give your PlayStation mates something to gawp at at the next Consumer Electronics Show. What are they? Controllers that send a vibration up the stick whenever the user is shot or meets an obstacle when playing games the likes of *Quake* and *EF2000*. Microsoft are currently putting the finishing touches to theirs and Steve will vouch for the quality of CH Products' own model. Okay, they'll probably cost about a £100, though, so you'd better have a word with the bank before you buy it. It doesn't matter if they don't catch on – in fact, there's nothing more high-fashion than something completely and utterly useless.

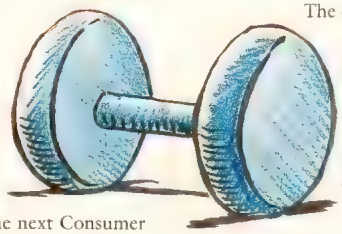
5. Meet some new friends

Let's face it, you're lonely. You haven't spoken to another PC since you first sat in the window of PC World with your ugly mates, dreaming of being bought by a nice family with 2.2 children, 3.6 mortgages and a Ford Sierra. You need to get out more, to reach out and touch someone. You need the Internet – the sprawling electronic information super-highway that allows your games to talk to their games.

For this, you'll need a modem. 1997 will be a revolutionary year for communications technology, with modems that run at something like 100 times their present speeds, live connections to Web pages (instead of being downloaded first) and super-fast multi-player gaming. Quake World, Id Software's incredible new on-line gaming service, should put a smile on your serial port, as will BT's dedicated Wireplay service which already has support from the likes of Gremlin, Ocean and Virgin and should, if it takes off, provide BT with the cash they need to pay Bob Hoskins to leave the nation's TV screens forever and live in utter silence a few metres south of the North Pole.

You could, if you wanted to be particularly flash, go for an ISDN connection. This is a super-wide bandwidth (about 64,000 bps) that uses cable technology to connect you to the Internet. It's currently used by businesses, but you could spend this year convincing your owner to install it, along with 250,000 channels of poor quality television that would make Ricki Lake seem intellectual. This system is available now, so we could fix you up right away. If you can wait another six months, though, those super-fast modems should do the trick.

"Quake World, Id Software's incredible new on-line gaming service, should put a smile on your serial port."



The cupboard door opened a crack.

"Okay, I'm coming out," said the PC, "but don't look. I don't want anyone to see me until I've transformed myself from ugly office box into streamlined multimedia gaming station."

We turned away.

"Fine, whatever you say. But before you start with all that, we need you for a game review. It won't hurt, and it'll only take a minute," Steve assured him.

The hard drive purred in thought.

"Just this one, and then I'm off. It'd better be something good," he said.

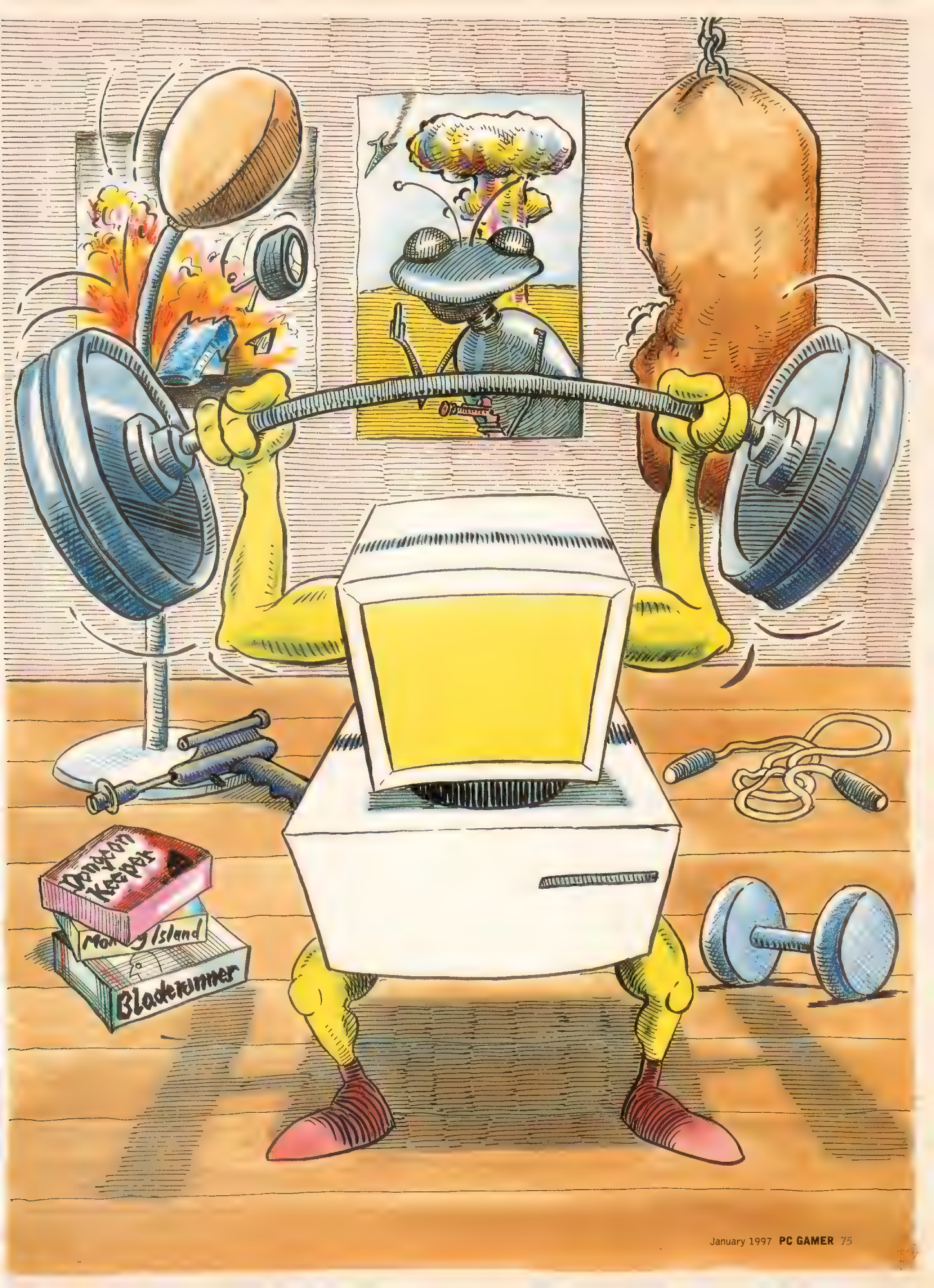
Mark began to laugh.

"It is. It's going to be great, I'm certain," Steve lied.

The PC was getting suspicious.

"What is it, then?"

"I'll give you a clue. It's on 6 CDs and it begins with a 'P'..." PCG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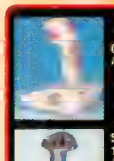
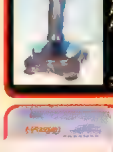

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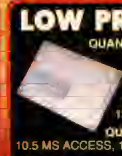

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Diary

This month Raffaele Cecco and a couple of his King of the Jungle friends discuss the nuts and bolts of game design.

WE'RE BACK, AND several people are contributing to this month's diary. We're now in the thick of game design itself and some aspects need special attention at this stage. In particular there is the computer opponent's intelligence, level design, portability of code (as *Agent Armstrong* is in development for both the PC and PlayStation) and the main character's design and style. So let's answer the first couple of those questions.

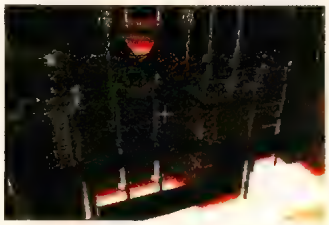
Raffaele Cecco on opponent intelligence

Getting the opponents 'intelligence' right in any game throws up numerous problems, not least of which is making them fun. Being a 3D game, *Agent Armstrong* (remember, it's a working title) imposes the added problem of complex terrain negotiation. Making opponents walk around corners, jump over crates and duck in and out of doorways while chasing the player, dodging his bullets and firing a machine gun is, on the face of it, a programming nightmare. But hey, that's what I'm here for.

I would love to go on about how I donned my programming super hero cape and quickly came up with a neat piece of AI code which could cope with any possible gaming scenario and had my opponents running round like crack SAS troops while playing Chess and reciting Chaucer – but no, getting opponent intelligence right is all about diligently prodding, poking and kneading your code over a period of months until things feel right and are fun to play. The source code looks a bit

"Getting opponent intelligence right is all about diligently prodding, poking and kneading your code over a period of months until things feel right and are fun to play."

An early development screen used to refine the artificial intelligence and find path routines.



messy, but as long as it's fast who cares?

Without getting too boringly technical, here's how I'm solving some of the problems mentioned above:

1) Terrain negotiation

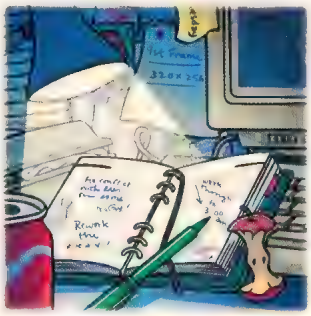
Basically, a rough path is laid down in the level mapper by the level designer (Mark or Joe). The opponent tries its best to follow this path using a curved spline algorithm with a bias towards the player. AI code is included to make the opponent walk round or jump over obstacles where possible. This enables an opponent to be placed in a complex environment (e.g. a warehouse full of crates) without getting stuck. He will appear to weave in and out of, and jump over, obstacles intelligently while chasing the player.

2) Shooting the player

Blasting randomly into walls, floors and ceilings looks unintelligent, so a series of checks are performed before the opponent fires. Once the desired vector *(Direction and speed. – Stephane Koenig)* of the bullet has been established using a bit of geometry, a line of sight algorithm is applied to check whether the bullet will hit an obstacle or Agent himself. Ignoring most of the 'hit obstacle' bullets will make the opponent fire as accurately as a sniper. *(Obviously, if we wanted the opponents to react faster, more accurately and with more intelligence than the player, it would be possible. Thus the task at hand is really making clever code that emulates 'the less intelligent' human. – Steph)*

Mark Benley on 2D vs 3D level design

For quite a few years now I've always worked with levels based around 2D graphics, so there's never been any real depth to the screen. The problems involved in 2D tend to revolve around



the limitations of graphics space and the old 'more sprites vs more background' argument. However, with the increase in capability of the new consoles and ever more powerful PCs, proper 3D worlds with near unlimited (ha!) graphics space, a whole new world of possibilities has opened up.

The main problems in 3D lie with forcing the player to take the route through the level which is envisaged without making it feel as though they have no freedom of movement. How do you make the player tackle that huge mob of thugs you've spent ages meticulously placing rather than simply running around them? It's a problem most 3D games don't seem to worry about. All of a sudden all those ideas that were used to build up simpler 2D levels just don't work anymore. I suppose I'll just have to come up with a few new ways of making the player's life difficult. Hmmmm... PCG

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Still the game I know and love, I would highly recommend the purchase
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Accurate, easy and fun to play, this game is well worth the money
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Sort It Out

Before we got hold of them, this month's raw data recruits were a complete bloody shambles. But now that we've screamed at them a bit, sent them on ten mile runs and given them a short sharp haircut, they make damn fine charts.

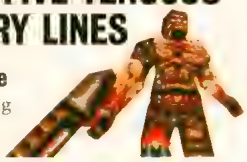
TOP FIVE BEAT-'EM-UPS

1 Virtua Fighter Remix
2 WWF Wrestlemania
3 Toshinden
4 Mortal Kombat 3
5 FX Fighter

TOP TEN UNDERACHIEVING GAMES

1 Terra Nova
2 The Settlers
3 System Shock
4 Flight Unlimited
5 A-Train
6 Shadowcaster
7 Fade To Black
8 Warhammer
9 Virtua Fighter Remix
10 Wipeout

TOP FIVE TENUOUS STORY LINES



1 Quake

Justifying your right to wander about gothic castles blowing chunks out of passing beasties has not been one of the great moral debates of the '90s. Thanks, of course, to the far-sighted individual at Id who tacked a plot onto *Quake* with all the skill of Oliver Reed pinning the tail to the donkey.

2 Mortal Kombat

There's never any excuse for drop-kicking complete strangers in the face even if you're a demi-god from the Outworld. And gambling the fate of the entire world on a bunch of Karate Kids at a mystical tournament is right out. Dripping with every martial arts cliché known to man, the *Mortal Kombat* plot is harder to swallow than Johnny Cage's goolie punch. Some consider ripping out people's spinal cords gratuitous, but it's nowhere near as uncalled for as this story line.

3 The Muppets CD-ROM

For one heart-failing instant, *The Muppets CD-ROM* does dupe you into believing your PC has gone down with all hands onboard. After all, it's the kind of plausible nightmare scenario we live in the shadow of every day. But, ha ha, (relieved mop of brow) it's just some babble from the sick bed about Muppets in your PC, trying to fix your ruined hard drive by completing games like Fozzie's bad joke Missile Command.

4 The Neverhood

The Neverhood's claim to be a game is slender enough, never mind the legitimacy of its story line. And the existential plot which charges you with discovering the meaning of life for a Plasticine man, by walking pointlessly for hours back and forth across 39 identical rooms, deserves only hoots of derision given the abject meaninglessness of the game.

5 Atmosfear

In a Land of Limbo on the Other Side, a place beyond your nightmares between Nowhere and Forever, you're eternally damned to play a video board-game that won't end because you can't get the right roll on two dice. No really, it happened to us.

TOP FIVE TROUSER-FILLING MOMENTS

1 Doom

Some things scream 'do not touch'. Do not approach or something cloth-soilingly bad will happen. You knew that a dark room in *Doom* was one of those things. You knew that the solitary spotlit gun lying innocently on the floor was a trap. And you knew, as your common sense ran in the opposite direction, that the moment you touched it all hell and scary skulls would break loose.

2 Wolfenstein 3D

This mother of all *Doom*-'em-ups induced one of the acutest cases of collywobbles in PC history with its vision of evil incarnate, Hitler, in... a big metal suit. Psychological terror was his key weapon as he homed in with his special tension-building attack mode. Knowing he'd shoot when he stopped moving, you had but a few frantic seconds of panic-pounding the fire button before the stomping stopped and it was his turn.

3 Quake

It's late, you're tired and edgy. Wherever you go you're pursued by relentless heavy breathing that reminds you of the sounds you heard behind you when you were six and had to go to the toilet late at night. Ominous grinds and moans prey on your mind, you open a door and RAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRGH! In a disorientating blur there's something huge in your face as you leap in the air punctuating screams with round after round of shotgun shells.

4 Tomb Raider

(Gravelly voice) Somewhere between a blind corner and blind panic is a place we only visit in our worst nightmares. The place of the streaky bacon Mummy. The independent view-finding camera, with horse-like danger sense, refuses briefly to follow, leaving you to imagine the conserved carcass attack from blood-curdling screams. Then, if you aren't off dialling 999 Mother, you get to see it for real.

5 Alone In The Dark

You could almost feel the ice cubes of fear being dropped down your back and the silently sinister sweaty fingers of dread caress your face as you watched the intro to this Victorian horror show. Stones crunch ominously as the investigator trudges up the path to a Norman Bates dream house. Some 'thing' is watching him from the window. Our hero, suddenly uneasy, looks up and a shadow appears to slip away... PCG

Cal Jones - Reviews Editor
Computer Gaming World UK
"The most utterly addictive game we've ever played, it beats the opposition hands down... it's brilliant."

Dan Slingsby - Editor PC Format
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"If you were to ask me why I'd buy War Wind over Warcraft 2, I'd say because War Wind you'd still be playing in 3 months time, where Warcraft 2 you'd probably get fed up with after a couple of weeks, if that."

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A Different World

In anticipation of the PC GAMER US annual awards issue, Gary Whitta deliberates over the best multi-player game of 1996.

AS I WRITE THIS, THE last few drops of PC gaming goodness have just been squeezed out of the year, and it's time to get stuck into 1997 (for all of us except the guys at EA Sports, of course, whose calendar seems to be stuck permanently ahead of everyone else's – I was just invited up to Canada to see *NHL 98* in development!). But before we can press ahead, the PC GAMER US team has to get through the agonising ritual of picking the best games of 1996 for our annual awards issue. This year it will be harder than most. Game of the year? Gosh. *Red Alert, Civilization II, Tomb Raider, Quake*... how do you begin to choose the best of that bunch?

This year will probably see the introduction of a new award category, brought about by what undoubtedly has been THE big boom in PC gaming stateside this year – Best Multi-player Game. This is an easier toss-up, between *Quake* and *Red Alert*, not just because they're great games to play against friends, but because both deserve special praise for how easy they make it to find opponents and set up games on the Internet. *Quake*'s seamless in-built TCP/IP Internet connector makes getting hooked up a breeze, and the awesome QuakeSpy shareware utility (available just about everywhere on the Web) is nothing short of a miracle – just boot it up and Qspy tracks down as many currently playing Internet games as it can find and returns with all the information you need – who's playing, what level, what special rules there are and, most importantly, 'Ping' time. The 'Ping' is how fast the connection to the game-running server will be, so you can weed out slow, 'laggy' games and always pick those with the fastest frame rates. All you have to do is click on the game you like the look of, and Qspy loads *Quake* and connects you automatically. Pretty cool, huh?

"*Quake*'s seamless in-built TCP/IP Internet connector makes getting hooked up a breeze, and the awesome QuakeSpy shareware utility is nothing short of a miracle."

As for *Red Alert*, kudos to Westwood for having its Westwood Chat game server up and running in time for the game's launch, and including the server software free with the package. Once you've registered (for free) you can use the software to chat to other *Red Alert*ers, and, of course, set up and join games over the net. Like Qspy, Westwood Chat allows for a quick, no-mess, seamless connection and there's already a great range of players using the free service – I pulled an all-nighter last weekend playing against PC GAMER readers from the UK.

Join Mr. PC GAMER US, Gary Whitta, on Westwood Chat for a quick spot of *C&C* action.

There's no doubt that the States is leading the way in the multi-player revolution, not just with pay services like TEN and Mplayer, but with games like *Red Alert* and *Quake*, which come auto-fitted not just with multi-player modes but everything you need to actually get the most of those modes. I was at the unveiling of LucasArts' new Star Wars strategy game, *Rebellion*, where it was announced that a similar self-contained Internet option is being planned, so you can duke it out against any number of Darth Vaders out there on the Net. Even Eidos' sequel to *Tomb Raider* (due for Christmas '97) is being planned for multi-player now, as companies wake up to the fact that the more connectable their games are, the more they'll sell of them. This is what 1997 will be like, so if you don't already have a modem and an Internet service provider, get one and get one quick because otherwise, like those who didn't think CD-ROM drives would take off, you're going to find yourself cut out of a huge portion of PC gaming, and sooner than you think. In the meantime, I'm about to go get my ass kicked by seven other members of the PC GAMER US team in our regular weekly eight-player *Red Alert* match-up. I said I've been playing it a lot, but I didn't say I was any good. (PS. If you do happen to use Westwood Chat and bump into the username gazwhitta, do say hello – it'll be me looking for a thrashing.)

***Quake* continues to set the multi-player pace across the pond. C patches appear daily.**

● Gary Whitta is editor-in-chief of PC GAMER's US counterpart.

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WE'VE TOUCHED ON two areas of game design thus far. The concept and the team. So, by now we trust you'll have assembled a team of rag-tag, black T-shirt, long hairs to work on your 3D, Internet, gore and space extravaganza. Yes? Good. They've cheerfully claimed on an internal memo that they'll have the whole thing complete by next Tuesday, but being a seasoned veteran you know it's more likely to take a couple of years at least. It's time to start telling people about it, but before you can start mailing out the press releases you're going to need a name. Let's start with a working title shall we?

"Breaking the news of your game to the world is probably the saddest part of the whole process. This is the stage when you realise that you could have just stuck with a letter or number anyway."

Working title

The important thing to remember about the working title is that it is in absolutely no way important, as long as it has categorically nothing to do with your finished product. Id told people the real name of its follow-up to *Doom* – *Quake* in case you didn't know – and paid a tedious fiddly price. Id hadn't trademarked the title in all territories, so some wily coyote from Germany thought he'd get a head start on Id by registering *Quake* as a trademark – thereby hoping to make a packet of money from Id having to buy back the title. Id had to resort to tried-and-tested 'back-room-shenanigans' and 'lawyer-tomfoolery' to recover the brand. Hence the scene was set for the press briefing where former Id business manager Jay Wilbur flew off the handle and claimed that the sequel to *Quake* was going to be called Coca-Cola or even "Bu**-*uc****-Mother-*uc****-a**-holes... try to trademark that in Germany!"

Generally, with a working title, letters and numbers work well. But don't fall into the Bitmap Brothers' trap and keep your working title (Z), as it's unlikely to mean anything to anyone! Shiny went for, and kept, *MDK* and that doesn't mean anything to anyone either, especially since they've muddied the picture further with all their ads - Martians Deny Kidnapping, Murder Death Kill and so on. Some assume they're safe with working titles like Space Game or Adventure Game, but that's been done before, so you're unlikely to get much precious publicity, essential because it's about now you'll be looking for a publisher. Our top trick is to go for obscene, exaggerated and short titles like Pumpkin Jowls or Other Dead Kennedies.

The brain storm

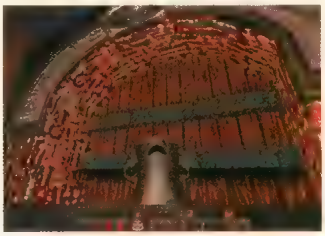
Get lots of coffee in for this bit. And as many mind-altering substances as you can lay your hands on. Oh, and some Danish pastries would be nice. Then maybe some pizza for later. And some bagels for breakfast. Rest assured that whatever name you come up with at this stage in the process it is essentially meaningless. Because the lawyers are coming...

The legal eagles

Like car brands – choosing the final name of your game is a minefield of decisions. Ideally, you want the title to be the same in all territories, so as well as ensuring with linguists that your name doesn't mean some terrifying insult to the French (unless you really want it to) you need to clear the title through the lawyers (just imagine – a world with no lawyers). Domark picked 'Total Mayhem' for its old-school *Syndicate*-style shooter, oblivious to the fact that Mirage had chosen the title 'Mayhem' for *its* old-school *Syndicate*-style shooter. The result was tears and writs, leading to Domark's decision to change its game name to *Total Mania*. The last laugh was on Domark though – as not even Mirage could call its game Mayhem as it turned out. So, Mirage ended up with *Bedlam*. As it turned out, though, the whole row was a lot of fuss about nothing – as neither game was exactly brilliant.

The logo

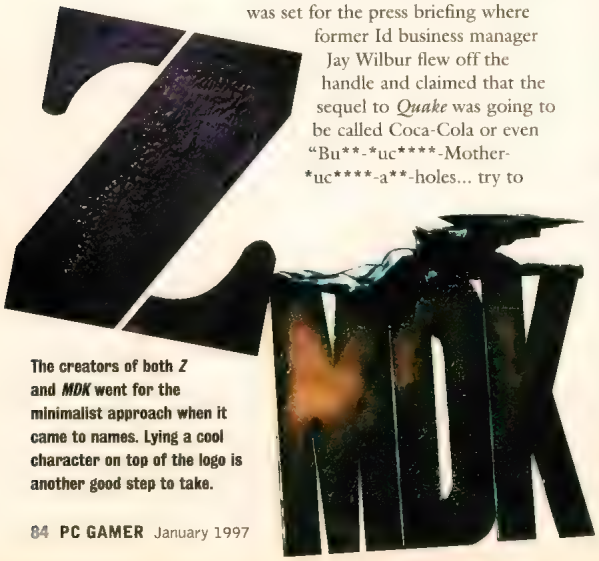
Finally, all those Danish pastries are going to pay off. You'll emerge victorious. Don't tell anyone! Or at least not until you've designed the logo (remember to obscure the words as effectively as you can) and patented the game worldwide.



The announcement

Breaking the news of your game to the world is probably the saddest part of the whole process. This is the stage when you realise that you could have just stuck with a letter or number anyway. Because no-one cares. It's not that they're rude or anything. They just don't give a damp. Try and convince the careless and they'll just point to the rock world and remind you that no-one even knew what a Wonderwall was before Oasis came along.

● **Next month: Selling it to a publisher. Get your company credit card ready...**



The creators of both *Z* and *MDK* went for the minimalist approach when it came to names. Lying a cool character on top of the logo is another good step to take.

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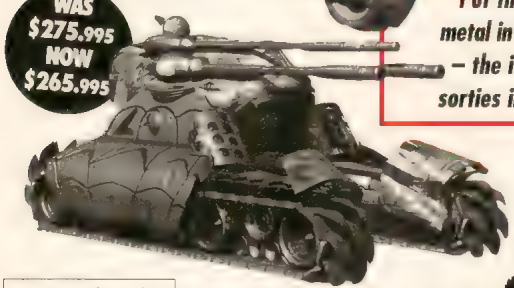

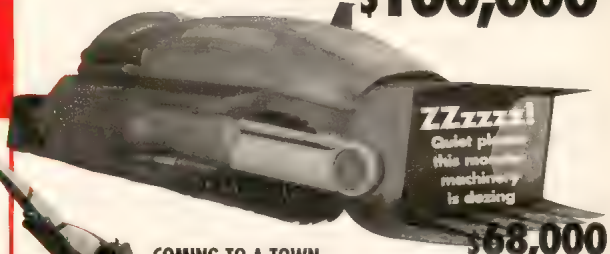

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M.A.X.

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Cables

If you've got something to say regarding the PC gaming business, write to James Flynn, Cables, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.

Thanks for calling

In your December issue you say Wireplay is good and I agreed – at first. But when I had trouble connecting I phoned their support line and a nice person answered and asked me the problem. I told him and he said exactly this, "Yeah.... er... okay... well thanks for calling. Bye" and hung up! Any chance of any decent support BT?

Andy Winearls, Oxford

It appears not, but it's not just you. We asked BT's Directory Enquiries for the Wireplay number a couple of months ago and they didn't have it. Since then, however, we've found them to be extremely helpful.

Sexy sweety-pie

Hi, I've just got on the Net and I would like to know where I could get some really cool pictures of Lara Croft – that sexy sweety-pie in *Tomb Raider*. The thing is, I would like her for my wallpaper in Windows just to make it look a bit better.

Mervyn Wilson, London

I have no idea, but I suspect your local newsagent's top shelf and a flat bed scanner would serve your needs.

Eat my sprouts

In your Money Pit Christmas dinner, why didn't you have any gravy? And if I didn't eat my sprouts, I wouldn't be allowed to open any presents on Christmas afternoon. What's so special about you that you can all leave yours?

Richard Longhurst, The Office Upstairs

We were all very spoilt as children.

Basically a joke

The one PC problem that annoys me most is when game companies produce their games with SVGA-only graphics. Why? The most recent example I can think of is *Rally Championship*. That is basically a joke on my P75 unless played through a tiny box. If Europress had included a VGA mode, it would have opened up the game to so many more players. As it is – I can't see anyone with less than a P90 buying the game and enjoying it, and there aren't too many of those.

Nick Gowman, High Wycombe

Programming games to run in SVGA-only is a risky decision to take. It stems from supporting the higher specced US market at the cost of the still predominantly 486-based European consumer. The desire to produce the best-looking games that run on fast Pentiums is entirely reasonable, but cutting off the lower-end systems at the same time is less so. Considering that C&C has now sold more copies in Europe than the US, you'd have thought that publishers would have realised effectively excluding the majority of their potential buyers is unwise.

Quake for wimps

Okay, so kids young enough to be my own laughed at my hapless gameplaying skills when I ventured to the local arcade a couple of years ago. Vegetables were thrown as I left, humiliated. Still, desperate for the buzz I went underground, saved my pennies and bought a shiny new PC. Content to get killed by the baddies at first I set out on the long mission to hone my gameplaying skills to perfection. Years of practice later and I considered myself an 'average' gamer, getting killed occasionally but never wimping out and going for Easy.

Confident with my training, I got myself hooked up to the Net to try my hand against the competition. All ☛

I'm just writing to tell you something you probably already know: PC GAMER's the second best mag in the world.

Simon Wadsworth, Leicester

And..?

Will Westwood release a demo of *C&C: Red Alert* and will you put it on your coverdisc?

Peter Ball, Ealing

Yes and yes, but it'll be in a few months' time.

Quake runs like a snail on sedatives on my 486.

Ed Campbell, Swindon

Synchronise your blinking to the frames being dropped and you won't notice. Probably.

"Fish out of water" is cool.

Alistair, Glasgow

But next month will be even cooler.

Microsoft Direct X , Need I say anymore.

Richard Robinson, Seattle

Obviously not.

excited, I tracked down and entered my first game of multi-player *Quake*. Then the mocking laughter of those kids years ago all came flooding back. After many attempts on different servers, the longest I managed to stay alive was a whole five seconds! So, finally, to the question. Does anyone out there know of a server that runs '*Quake* for Wimps' because I'd love to survive long enough to fire off a shot. Until then it's back off-line for another few years' practice.

Ray Chapman,
Cleethorpes

A bit sceptical

Two days ago I bought a fast modem, *Quake* and *Red Alert*. I downloaded QuakeSpy and boy, what a feast. Till two days ago I was a bit sceptical about your multi-player enthusiasm, but that has changed! I'm going to be addicted.

Frederick,
The Netherlands

Good. We aren't just saying this every month to annoy people without modems, you know. And for those of you who aren't familiar with QuakeSpy, it's a small program that scours the Internet looking for active games of Quake *before reporting on the number of players active, their abilities, and the lag time on the connection. Obscenely useful.*

Pales in comparison

Recently you featured a comparison between the UK and USA editions of PC GAMER. Being in Australia, I have the benefit of reading both, and would like to add a simple difference to the list that perhaps you could not – the UK magazine is ten times better than USA's. Why? For one, the American edition is so DRY. Maybe it's due to the 'conservative climate', or maybe the writers need to watch some Monty Python and get a sense of humour, but whatever it is, the result is a magazine that reads like a textbook. I would also suggest that they are too scared to give low marks due to corporate pressures that don't exist in the UK, hence them only using half the percentage scale. Add the fact that you have nearly finished the whole magazine by the time you reach the reviews section, plus the ten pages of ads you have to sift through to read the contents page, and you have a magazine that absolutely pales in comparison to your excellent production. Go on, admit what you know to be true – your mag kicks ass.

Lloyd Powell,
Australia

Thanks, but I'm not entirely sure they'd agree with you! The two markets are very different, but I suspect it's as much a team personality issue rather than a simple reflection of this fact. As for the lack of corporate pressure, I'm afraid that's untrue. We've worked extremely hard to lower our scores and remain fair to both readers and publishers over the past year, but only one side generally appreciates this. If anything, pressure increases because retailers use PC GAMER to help decide how many copies of each game to order. PCG

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER PRO WINNER!

Truthful and informative

If game publishers ever, heaven forbid, decide to quit creating and putting their demos on cover CDs, they should start creating interactive multimedia presentations of their games. And not just a short video clip, it should be a full-screen interactive multimedia presentation of their game. The presentations shouldn't contain any of the predictable PR stuff, but real information about the game, info about the creators, quotes from magazine reviews, and so on. It should, all in all, be a truthful and informative presentation. Like the *Civilization II* presentation you had on your CD.

Game publishers should also lower the prices of their games if they quit making demos, because then we wouldn't have the chance to try out a game first to see if we like it or not. In your article, a company was worried because on one CD there was at least 20 hours of gaming time, taking the time you should spend on a new computer game. Well, I can assure him, I do not install every game that may be on a CD, which I think many others don't either. I tend to like strategy games more than anything else, and that's why I mostly install only these demos. The demo of *Fragile Allegiance* was so superb that it is now first on my Christmas wish-list. Now I've bought games like *The Settlers II*, *Quake* and a few others on the strength of your demos. I have also ordered a shareware game called *Seek And Destroy* all the way from the UK, but if you hadn't put it on your cover CD, I would never have known about the game, and therefore never bought it.

In conclusion, your cover CD serves several purposes and one is to give potential buyers of a game a try-out period. The result is boosted sales for game publishers because if the buyer feels that the demo is great, he or she will go out and buy it. If they don't buy it, the game is not worth having. Of course, one could read a review in a magazine like PCG, but who's to say that the reader agrees with the reviewer? The opinion of a reviewer could be that a game is bad or mediocre, but the opinion for somebody else could be that it's a great game, and vice versa. The demos give the buyer the possibility to decide whether it's good or not.

Stefan Högdahl,
Finland

It all sounds so simple when put it like that. The level of fallout from that feature from all parties surprised me greatly, but the discussion in the industry seems to have moved on since. The situation will probably remain unchanged for the foreseeable future, with some games receiving full interactive demos and others just rolling demos. Every publisher has now realised that demos can *be counter-productive and they will no longer be seen as an automatic and essential part of every game's development schedule.*

Our Letter Of The Month earns its writer our favourite game controller: a Microsoft Sidewinder Pro joystick worth £60. Every other letter that's printed in full wins a handy PC GAMER pen.

MDK

Mohicans Discover Knitting?

» One title to watch «
EDGE

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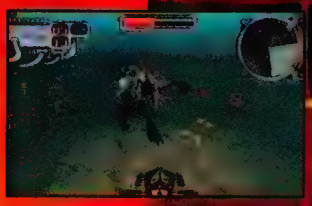

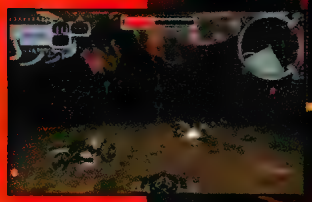

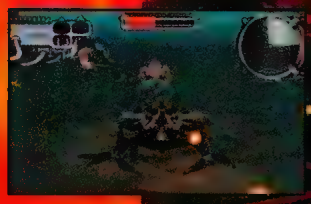

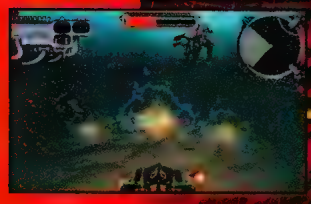

THE 47 YEAR WAR IS OVER.

FOR THE BUREAU IT ENDED TOO SOON. HAVING PROFITED HEAVILY FROM THE HOSTILITIES THAT HAVE NOW ENDED THE BUREAU IS DESPERATE TO PROVOKE A NEW CONFLICT. TO DO SO THEY HAVE HIRED YOU TO PILOT A MODIFIED BATTLE WALKER/SUB CALLED THE SLAMBIRD. AMOK WILL HAVE YOU IMMERSED IN A 3D NIGHTMARE IN WHICH YOU MUST DEMOLISH BUILDINGS, BLOW UP ARMY BASES AND SINK UNDERWATER BUNKERS TO DESTROY PEACE.

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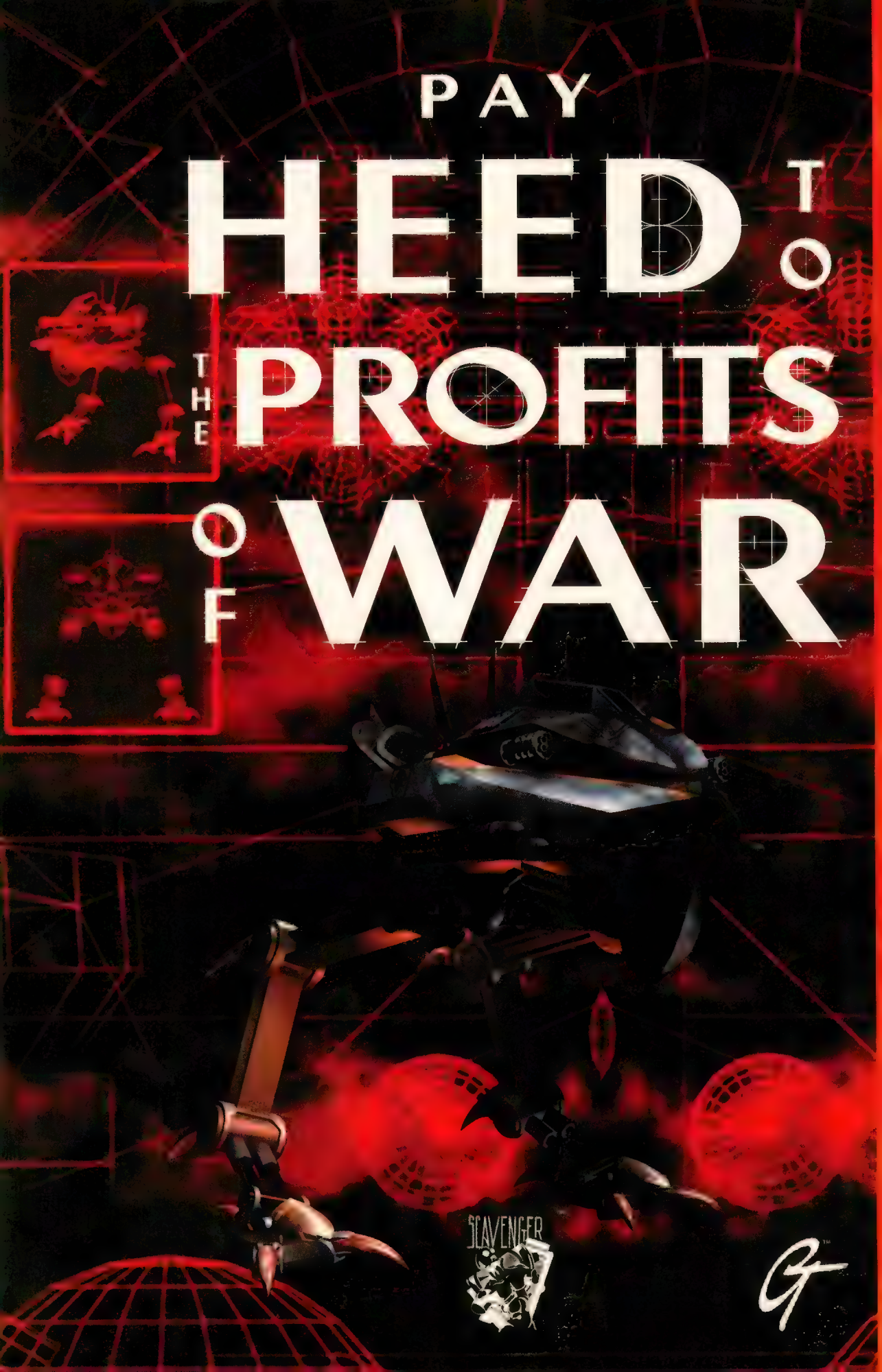
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THE PROFITS
OF WAR
SCAVENGER

NASCAR Racing 2

Publisher	Sierra
Developer	Papyrus
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£40
Minimum System	486DX2/66, 8Mb RAM
Recommended	Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now

Surprising

Who wants to review the sequel to *NASCAR Racing*? Hello? Hello? Oh, I'll do it then.

A POTTED HISTORY OF *NASCAR Racing* (PC style) in four brief steps: January 1995: *NASCAR Racing* is released. Every magazine says it's absolutely brilliant.

February 1995: *NASCAR* isn't played any more. All of a sudden oval tracks are boring and no-one has the Cray PC required to make it run comfortably. This is known as a backlash.

October 1996: *NASCAR* comes out on budget. It's still not that good, you know.

That explains at least why no-one wanted to review *NASCAR 2*. I used all the excuses I'd been saving up for months to fob the game off to some unsuspecting freelancer, but as is the case with such large titles, *NASCAR*'s reputation was a crumpled bonnet ahead of itself. I could talk conspiracy theory here, I could claim that the CIA had something to do with it, I could even ask Dan Akroyd to explain how it all happened Sneakers-style, but everyone I asked mysteriously passed on the offer of work, leaving the CD in my ungrateful possession.

But then I remembered how much I really liked *Grand Prix 2*, particularly going the wrong way round the track and seeing into how many smaller sections your opponents can be smashed. Optimism and potentially misplaced confidence can be a wonderful drug, and I needed one hell of a score as *NASCAR 2* installed. After smoking a salmon and doing a line of indelible marker, I was ready.

Oh look, it's in SVGA. Oh look, it runs very quickly for an SVGA racing game. Much quicker than *Grand Prix 2* can manage. And there's quite a lot of detail beside the tracks, and even little touches like ovals being much quieter during qualifying or practice – no crowds, less trailers in the centre.

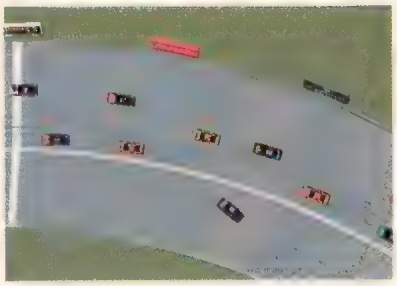
What's foxed me more than anything, though, is what makes it so different to the original. A quick flick through the various menus trying the more unusual options reveals

Jealous? Nooooo.

If you own a Pentium 133 you get this...

... but this is your lot for slow 486 owners.

"Runs very quickly for an SVGA racing game."



(Top) You may be fast, but there's no way you'll get past. (Middle) A small clip and the Burger King is fried. (Bottom) Dangerously entering play, the way to see it.

that most of the enhancements are about as obvious as Fergie's chastity. A visitor to our shores a few months ago, who claimed he represented Papyrus although we never rang the US offices to check, was excited to announce that the graphics engine was completely new. New it may be, but it is still displaying big cars driving around (mostly) oval tracks, so other than the fact that it moves at a decent speed it could still be the old one. You appreciate the realism when you flick other cars from the track, though, so this improvement, if it is one, is most welcome nevertheless.

The set-up screen I know for certain is a lot better. Whereas gear ratio settings involved a long trip down a series of menu pathways, stopping for a breather and a picnic about halfway down, all the set-up options are now ☛

The inevitable redecoration box

Just as the game itself has been souped up a little, so would it be remiss if Papyrus had neglected to update the highly innovative car customisation screen.

Paint all manner of personal motifs onto the various panels of your car. I have chosen to intimidate my fellow competitors with the terrifying *Quake* name by which I am sometimes known. The impaling part can be assumed.

There's nothing wrong with bright clothes, and now that Jonathan has left the building I intend to incorporate them as much as possible. It's also safer for my ground crew during late night practices. Shades at the ready.

The bits that aren't covered by a menacing paint job can also be given specific colours. Admittedly it's all starting to go a little too far by this point, but it is pleasant to view your boot's warm orange glow when you go for the outside view.

On the right track

It's not all ovals you know. Honest. Okay, so there are lots of them (18), and only four non-oval courses, but just look at the difference.

GOODWRENCH 400
Yer bog standard oval. No surprises there, then.

FOOD CITY 500
A much steeper oval, thank you very much.

POCONO 500
A triangular course!? What will they think of next?

SAVE MART 300
This one wouldn't look out of place in *GP2*.

Ideally, you'd out-brake everyone on this corner, taking them on the inside and then forcing them wide.

It makes it that much easier if you know that the person you have just smashed to pieces in the pit lane deserved it, growing a moustache like that.

stored on one handy SVGA screen looking not unlike a piece of paper. Another splattering of applause for Papyrus. Of course the real-life players have been updated, but we are British and have no inkling of the sport in this country, so this aspect is instantly glossed over.

The last thing the potential impostor from Papyrus mentioned is one that is likely to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up as if you were a tomcat and I was a small puppy that has just entered your home for the first time and am to be the new favoured family pet. Yes, *NASCAR 2* has multi-player options involving plush teak effect networks and using Sierra's fancy new Ten Internet gaming site. Eight players could race each other, which, I'd be tempted to say, is where *NASCAR 2* comes into its own, but on this occasion it would be a lie. Our fancy Internet connection couldn't get onto Sierra's site, and because the game isn't out yet, no-one would

"Simply drive the wrong way around the track and destroy everyone else."

Takes all sorts

NASCAR 2 **has clearly been designed for the simulation enthusiast, but Papyrus have accidentally put in loads of things that make it fun for the arcade player. Of course, if you want to do it properly...**

Do your single, timed qualifying lap to get a good place on the grid. Then carefully move your way up the field in the hope that you will be well placed by the end. You may need to retire if your car becomes too damaged.

Or, if you find your vehicle doesn't run so well with your erratic and impatient driving, switch on the indestructible mode and start the race from the back of the grid, nudging your way to the front whenever possible.

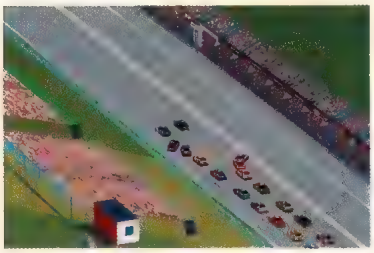
And when racing gets too much, wheel spin your car through 180 degrees and charge the wrong way around the track, destroying the opposition. As long as your aim is true, you'll have the only intact car by the end of the race.

Let's see the replay

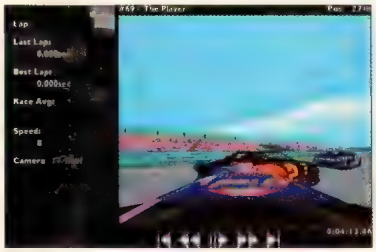
NASCAR Racing 2 **has a great replay feature, essential for demonstrating your destructive tendencies during psychological sessions with your shrink. A variety of classy camera angles helps your psychiatrist in his assessment. It's just a shame that you are limited to a basic three when you race (cockpit, close chase and far chase).**

The classic trackside camera – it usually works.

From your bumper – a real feeling of speed.



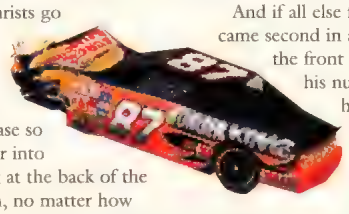
A floating blimp – nothing escapes its watchful eye.



Clamped terrified to the top of your roof – hang on.

be playing anyway. But just imagine it. I did.

So those are the new bits, and with the best of the old bits *NASCAR 2* is thoroughly worth playing. Simulation purists go for the anoraky realism and attention to detail, and yet even the most dedicated arcade gamer will find appeal. What makes this release so much fun is popping your car into indestructible mode, starting at the back of the grid and going all out to win, no matter how dangerously you have to drive to do it. And if you find that you just can't catch everyone up, because of some foolish car set-up, simply drive the wrong way around the track and destroy everyone else. *(It's still not as much fun as in Indy 500 though. – Ed)*



And if all else fails... On one occasion I came second in a race, one second behind the front man, and after finding out his number I patiently waited for him to park up before SMASHING HIS BLOODY VEHICLE TO BITS. Hahahaha!

Surprisingly, though, oval tracks aren't as boring as you might think. As well as two or three almost Grand Prix-style courses, you do actually notice the difference between the various ovals. In a flash of generosity, Sierra are planning to release free extra tracks using our cover CD in the future. In conclusion, then: don't be worried about the simulation side. Play it as an arcade game if need be. An astoundingly close challenger to the plush throne-like position inhabited by *Grand Prix 2*.

STEVE OWEN

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

After the slightly boring *NASCAR* who'd have thought the sequel would be such fast fun?

87%

Wages Of War

Using all their experience and base cunning, your team of highly trained professionals deploy their tarmac camouflage jumpers to maximum advantage.

Publisher	3DO
Developer	New World Computing
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£40
Minimum System	486, 8Mb, SVGA, x2 CD-ROM, Win95
Recommended	Pentium, 16Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now

Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of gameplay.

Fizzling

IF YOU FEEL A TINGLE OF ILLICIT excitement at the thought of black clad, balaclava-wearing men in Iranian embassies, then *Wages Of War* should most certainly be brought to your attention.

It's all about squad level, small arms tactics as you're the host of a raiding party, choppering mercenaries into trouble spots to firefight over top secret blue prints, hostages or important things that want blowing up. Operations are conducted in the hard X-COM currency of action points, which are exchanged by your units every turn for life's little extras like walking, running and spraying several hundred rounds at the nearest shadow.

I won't bother you with the plot, as you've heard it all before. Suffice to say that there's plenty of near-future blather concerning state/corporate/cola sponsored terrorism over diminishing resources and the corner shop convenience of black market weaponry. Luckily, it all adds up to a huge demand for soldiers of fortune, and so you stick an ad in the Yellow Pages and wait for clients.

> *"During skirmishes, tactical positioning is everything."*

Play the 16 mission campaigns and it won't be long before you're laughing all the way to your Swiss bank account. A fat contractual advance paying for Abdul's armaments, intelligence reports, training and if not quite the Dirty Dozen then at least quite a grubby eight. Although until you earn prestige and start turning a profit, you won't be able to hire anyone more deadly than a Chelsea pensioner with a tartan rug.

During skirmishes, tactical positioning is everything, and the slow, tense, turn-by-turn approach superbly reflects the nervous excitement of a commando operation. I'd imagine. And, despite its needless clumsiness, the WOW system allows you to crawl your troopers through marram grass, give first aid,

Featured are the kind of weapons catalogues normally only kept by quiet types who watch a lot of action films.

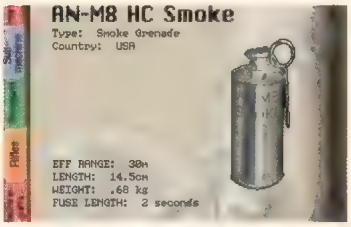
Pretending to be a pot plant is the last remaining polo-neck-sweatered goon. Quickly, riddle him with Uzi fire.

Don't leave home without it

Whether you're saving VIPs, nicking documents or doing demolition work, there are certain bits of kit which are indispensable for your outfit.

Enhanced Infantry Medical Kit
Includes two field dressings, one pre-loaded morphine hypodermic, sutures, needle, butterfly sutures, antiseptic, compression bandage, tourniquet.

Polyfilla for patching up bullet-ridden mercs.



Use smoke grenades for DIY fog-of-war effects.

Freedom is an AK. An essential lifestyle accessory.

Only available later on, but very reassuring.

Choose kevlar armour for longer lasting mercs.

"Riddle polo-neck-sweatered goons with Uzi fire."

lay down a pattern of smoke grenades, cut wire fences, riddle polo neck sweatered goons with Uzi fire, set up cross fires and even evacuate your wounded.

What helps is that the missions are well structured. Sometimes there is a suspenseful build-up before enemy contact, sometimes you've got to cut off escape routes and in one mission crazed desert dwellers laid into me from the start while my specialists specialised in breaking their weapons and spraining their ankles.

What doesn't help are three serious flaws. First, your freebooters move in order of initiative not in the order you want. I don't imagine real mercenaries move in rotation, it's unnecessarily restrictive and leads to bottlenecks. Second, the campaign is utterly linear. You'll do all the missions in strict sequence just as long as you stay in business, leaving you with a plot line about as atmospheric as the moon. But worst of all, in an utter dereliction of game-designing duty, when you complete certain missions you are made to clean up the mess as well. Thus in one horrific experience I was forced to march my badly wounded ops (bleeding action points into the sand) the entire length of the map to a pickup point, for over an hour after all resistance had been eliminated. It may be the most effective incentive ever devised to make you preserve pixellated life, but it's not fun.

But between the botches and despite its failure to advance the X-COM genre, *Wages Of War* still offers extensive interludes of tension, tactical challenge and even excitement.

MARK DONALD

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

A highly exciting game but at times one that's marred by some pointless and irritating flaws.

78%

Fable

Publisher	Telstar
Developer	Symbiosis
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£40
Minimum System	486DX2/66, 8Mb RAM
Recommended	As above
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now

Sacre bleu! It's 'Wacky' French 'humour' in yet another 'wackily humorous' point-and-click adventure. From France.

Fibbing

WE ALWAYS FIND IT A LITTLE suspicious when a publishing company neglects to send us a game for review, but we find it considerably more irksome to be casually wandering around music shops at lunchtime and happening upon boxed copies of the very games that have kept themselves so quiet up until now. In some selfless attempt to provide an essential service to you, our readers, we forwent low pay and poor conditions to scrape together as many coppers from our threadbare pockets as we could find. By the time we had finished begging from little Jimmer, we had the £33 that the shop required in exchange for said software title.

I'm fiercely proud of my impartial professionalism, so a quick cup of tea was

"Fairly charming at times."

required to soften the ire from earlier, before embarking on the epic journey of points and clicks that is Telstar's *Fable*.

Not only French but Parisian, in fact. And the impression I get is that at the offices of Symbiosis, more weight is given to the early, simplistic, fly-on-the-wall adventures typified in

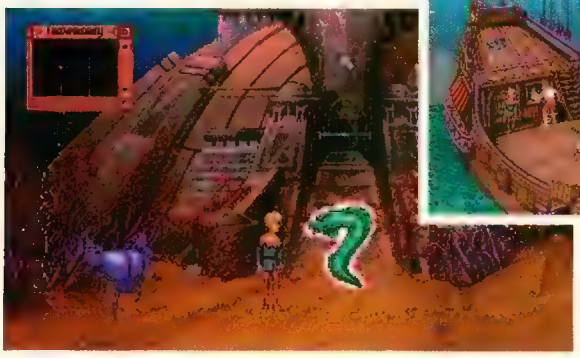
Sierra's *King's Quest* series (mid to later episodes) than the plush artistic style that has made LucasArts so unfeasibly rich. *Fable* is, in this respect, unremarkable, unoriginal and uninspired. Graphically it's one of those, ooo, well, not bad; nothing to really moan about type affairs, but why release something so plain for the same price and at the same time as the astounding *Broken Sword* and *Toonstruck*?

The plot angle is nothing to write to your

The close-ups as you examine items or talk to characters is a nice touch. Cuh, the French, hey?

literary agent about either. Strangely reminiscent of *King's Quest* once again (that's the Sierra one), it's one of exploration and recovery of vastly important trinkets, the kind of story that leads designers neatly into a selection of bog standard puzzles, such as monsters to get past or doors to open. Stick a few annoying deaths in there to break up the pace a little, make things altogether slower with *huge* location descriptions and design an annoying click-click-click-click interface and you have what should be annoying.

But at the risk of sounding like I'm mellowing in my old age, it ain't all that bad. Fairly charming at times, humour hitting no less often than missing and mostly logical puzzles create an unimaginative game, but one that is rarely bland. STEVE OWEN



The inventory is a bit annoying, though, even if you can drag it to anywhere you want. (Left) Pretty graphics do not maketh a game.

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

Competent yet uninspiring adventure that borrows from other games but perhaps not always the right ones.

64%

3 D REAL TIME

Age of Sail

EXPERIENCE NAVAL WARFARE AT ITS MOST BLOODY, BRUTAL AND TACTICAL. HUNDREDS OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VESSELS EVER TO TAKE TO THE HIGH SEAS HAVE BEEN RECREATED FOR YOU TO SAIL...AND REDUCE TO BEATEN WRECKS IN FIERCE BATTLES THAT CAN LAST FOR HOURS OR DAYS. NAIL YOUR COLOURS TO THE MAST OF A SINGLE SHIP OR AN ENTIRE FLEET AND CHOOSE YOUR CREW AND WEAPONS WISELY. THE HUNT IS ON...

A solitary man-of-war looms in the distance. The wind is in your favour but a sudden change in its direction and a lapse in your concentration could mean you lose your prey. Now she's almost in range...Wear round and bear down... She's drawing parallel... Run across her bows and rake her with the port battery. Luff up and give her the starboard battery again and again... Hundreds of booming cannons unleash a virtual storm of iron.

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Destruction Derby vs Damaged

	Sega Rally	Destruction Derby 2
Publisher	Sega	Psygnosis
Developer	AM3	Reflections
Format	CD-ROM	CD-ROM
Price	£40	£45
Minimum System	P100, 16Mb RAM, Win95	P75, 8Mb RAM (in DOS)
Recommended	P166	P100, 16Mb RAM (for Win95)
Sound Support	All major cards	All major cards
Release Date	Out now	Out now

Sega Rally's hogging the swings. _Destruction Derby 2_ won't let anyone on the roundabout. Meet the new bullies in the PC racing playground.

YEARS AGO IT WAS THE AMIGA. Then the first wave of Japanese consoles took over. Two years ago the PC was the top dog. Now we're back to the consoles. What are we talking about? Systems with the best graphics capabilities, naturally.

Because the sad fact of the matter is that, for the moment at least, the Sony PlayStation, the Sega Saturn and the new boy in class, the Nintendo 64, have the best graphics capabilities of any games system, ever. That's not to say of course that they also have the best games (after all, *Command & Conquer* isn't exactly a graphical feast), it's just that, for high-speed, graphics-intensive stuff, consoles beat PCs hands down.

Depressing as this thought may be, it's important to bear in mind when you come to consider racing games, particularly racing games that first made their homes on other formats. Both *Sega Rally* and *Destruction Derby 2* carry with them a prestigious name and reputation, which might tempt some PC owners to rush out and buy one of them in a fit of excited and foolhardy mine's-just as good-as-yours bravado. However, £40 is a lot of money to make a horrible mistake with, so let's go through this a little more scientifically.

Both games are direct ports of the Saturn (*Rally*) and PlayStation (*Derby*) originals. All the tracks, features and extra bits of the original have been faithfully reproduced for the PC. *Sega Rally* started life in the arcade, where arguably it's still the finest racing game ever to have existed. *Destruction Derby 2* is the work of Psygnosis' in-house Reflections team and is the much improved sequel to one of the original PlayStation line-up.

Although both games share an obvious racing theme, it's *DD2* that boasts the more complex game structure. There are three ways to play the game. Wreckin' Racing is the main event and sees points awarded both for your final position at the end of the race and the amount of damage you've managed to wilfully inflict on your opponents. Stock Car Racing takes this mean-driving aspect out, making your race position all-important. *Destruction Derby* (which takes place in one of four deathmatch arenas) is simply a fight for survival – last car revving wins.

While *DD2*'s destruction element could have easily been just a gimmick – added on to personalise 'yet another' racing game – in reality that's far from the case. Not only is the racing element challenging enough in itself, the very real possibility of your car not making it through the entire race is a major worry. Before you really adjust to the game's controls (it'll take a couple of races), you'll quite often find that it's your own inept driving that finishes off your car, not enemy action. Front wings take a particular pounding as you mis-judge corners, skid through and hit the barrier wall. In your

If you're after powerslides, realistic car handling and gritty racing, then *Sega Rally* is the best there is.

The screen layout is simple and unobtrusive, and has Sega's hallmark balance of functionality and style.

Sega Rally

Destruction Derby 2 is a far more frantic, action-packed game. You tend to be in the thick of things all the time, but the wider track makes it much more of a race than the first game ever was.

first week with the game, the idea of deliberately driving into other cars to score points will seem far from attractive. It's a race for survival out there and if your driving's not up to it, you won't last long.

Sega Rally, on the other hand, is a far more classic (some might say far less imaginative) racing game, and the only real way to play is in Championship mode. Here, starting from last position, you must battle your way around four separate stages to try and end up as the eventual champion. Just like the arcade original, a timer counts down as you drive along. If the timer reaches zero before you make it to the next checkpoint, then your race ends there and then. Although 14 other 'drone' cars will get in your way during the race, hogging the racing line and generally

> "DD2 *boasts the more complex game structure.*"

being a nuisance, there's no benefit from trying to crash into them. Similarly, the only penalty is the inevitable time loss – your rally car is held together with magical video game glue.

Although *Rally*'s design might sound limited, you have to remember that the game ☛

Extras, extras, read all about them

When AM3 ported *Sega Rally* to the Saturn, they added a whole new selection of extra bits and pieces, all of which have made it to the PC. The best of these is undoubtedly the 'Ghost mode'. Here, you can practise any of *Rally*'s four courses uncluttered by other traffic. The computer then saves your race, your exact driving path and speed, to memory. When you come to practise that track again, you can opt to have a ghostly image of your previous race displayed for you to race against.

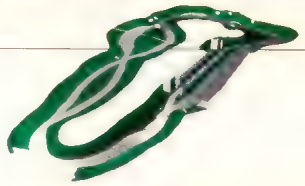
The Ghost mode is an excellent way of learning and comparing different lines through corners and other sections of the course. It's also a brilliant way of competing against friends to set the best time either on the same computer or by downloading the ghost file and loading it up elsewhere.

However, the Ghost mode isn't the only two-player interest in *Rally*. The game boasts a fully-fledged split-screen mode as well as a PC-only Netplay option (*Destruction Derby 2* is exclusively one-player). Unsurprisingly, the split-screen mode loses a lot of the peripheral trackside detail and one or two polygons in the car itself. However, Sega made an excellent job of keeping the *Rally* feel intact, and the two-player mode is almost as durable as the real game itself. The Netplay option is the first chance *Rally* fans have had to play head-to-head as it is in the arcade – all you need now is a fast modem and the Internet address of someone with a similarly high-specced machine.

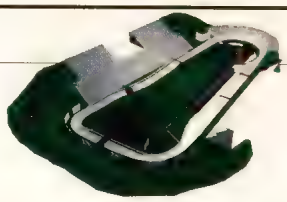
Track and field

Both games do well when it comes to the number of courses on offer. As we've seen, *Rally* has four but *DD2* has a distinctly impressive seven, plus four different destruction bowls.

DD2's tracks are up to two miles long, and include the following features: tunnels, banked corners, hills, straight jumps and the terrifying twist Jump (sending your car flying in a Man With The Golden Gun, corkscrew-type fashion).

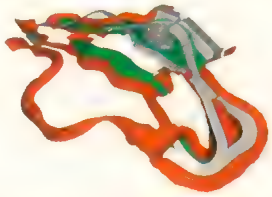


PINE HILLS RACEWAY
A large banked corner, only a small jump and no sharp corners make this the ideal track for beginners.

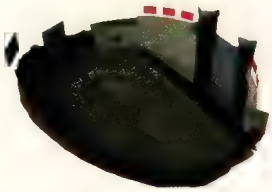


CHALK CANYON
Two huge jumps, some very fast corners and a treacherous bottleneck mark out this course.

LIBERTY CITY
Get promoted to the second division and you're rewarded with this track. Say 'thank you'.



SCA ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION SPEEDWAY
Narrow tunnels, multiple branched sections, jumps and crossovers all make an appearance.



DEATH BOWL
DD2's toughest bowl. A huge crusher runs along one side. Fall in and you're history.

comes from the arcade, where accessibility is the key. The four courses are the paradigm for arcade racing design – quite brilliant and as yet totally unsurpassed. From the first, Desert stage, where the wide track and gentle curves lead to a final, seemingly never-ending hairpin, to the narrow twisting hell of the fourth, Lakeside, no video game tracks have ever been so well designed or executed. Similarly, the car handling and movement is the finest you'll ever see in any driving game. In corners, the amount of four-wheel-drive drift depends on the type of track surface you drive on. Win the extra hidden car (the rear-wheel drive Lancia Stratos) and you'll have to completely re-learn your driving style as you battle to put increased power through two less driving wheels. After playing *Sega Rally*, you realise quite how inaccurate and uninvolving many racing games are. Put simply, it's the best there is.

So then, two great racing games on the PC? Well technically that's true – two great racing games are now available on the PC, whether they've brought their greatness with them or not is a matter for question. We've already discussed the PC's problems with fast 3D stuff and no more obvious is it than with the PC versions of these two racers.

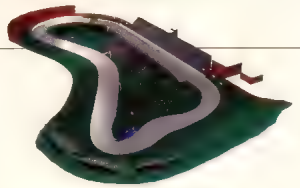
Destruction Derby 2 shouldn't be on sale to anyone with less than a Pentium 100 and they should still forget about the high-res option. The whole key to making a successful racing game is car response, and in *DD2* on a low-end Pentium there just isn't any. In a game where deft driving is important merely to survive, and winning entirely dependent on it, you have to be sure that when you steer right, your car moves right immediately – not soon after or a little later (within the week on a P60) but immediately. Another problem *DD2* suffers is exaggerated clipping on the track horizon. While this doesn't come close to the horrors of *Daytona*, it still detracts from the look and feel of the game.

If *Destruction Derby 2* is depressing news for mid- and low-range Pentium owners, then *Sega Rally* is no news at all – it simply doesn't involve them. Unless you're lucky enough to own a Pentium 166 or better, don't even bother thinking about *Sega Rally*. Purge it from your minds this instant. The whole point of the game, the very essence of its brilliance, lies in the way your rally car responds. Sega have managed to build in to the PC version that remarkable quality that's always stood *Rally* out from the crowd, but only on really high-end systems. On anything else the tragic news is that *Sega Rally* is just another, fairly unremarkable racing game.

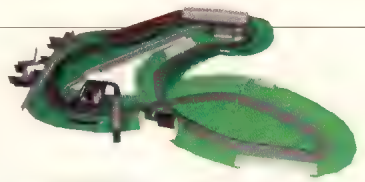
Comparing the two games on their original systems head-to-head, *Sega Rally* comes out the winner. Although it boasts fewer tracks and cars, and fewer of the gaming options of *DD2*, it still

> **"Sega Rally's *car handling is the finest you'll see in any driving game.*"**

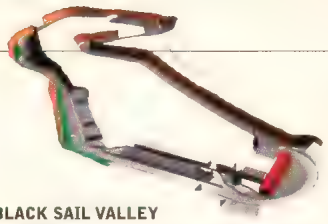
(Above) Course design is *DD2*'s most improved area. (Right) A fine example of a triangle polygon engine at work.



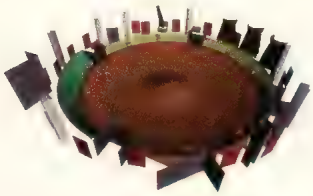
CAPRIO COUNTY RACEWAY
Strangely, the third track is devoid of any really special features. Just keep ahead of the pack.



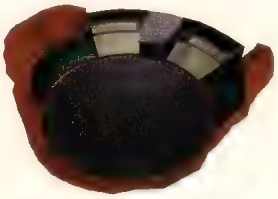
SCA MOTORPLEX
A figure-of-eight track. The game's most vicious hairpin occurs here, so watch out.



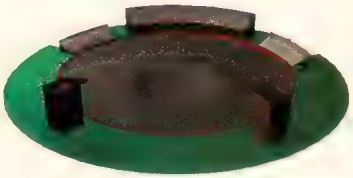
BLACK SAIL VALLEY
One large jump and some impressive banked sections are the highlights here.



RED PIKE ARENA
Flat like the others apart from a raised hillock in the centre. Can cause huge jumps.



THE COLOSSEUM
A plain bowl more along the lines of *Destruction Derby's* first incarnation.

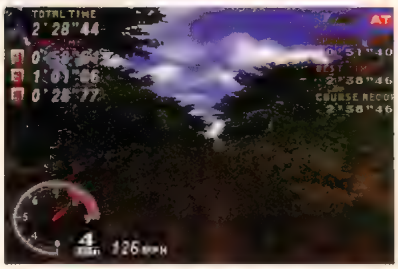


THE PIT
Flat again apart from the central depression which funnels cars into a central crash zone.

remains the benchmark for racing simulation and excitement. On the mutually foreign turf of the PC, however, the situation is less clear. *DD2* is by far the best optimised and presented package – it runs reasonably well on a P100 and even if the car handling is somewhat affected by slow-down, the game still has a lot to offer. *Sega Rally*, on the other hand, has the worst interface of any PC game yet to have a £40 RRP slapped on it, and is a complete waste of time played on anything less than a top-end system. It's a bit of a dilemma, really.

In a couple of years' time, PCs will once again be pre-eminent, and worries about which ported version of a game is best will revert to the property of console owners. Until then, games like *Destruction Derby 2* and *Sega Rally* are always going to be vaguely disappointing for the few who can cope with their demands, and inaccessible for the majority who can't.

JAMES ASHTON



The jumps in *Sega Rally* are rare but feel perfect when you do reach them. This one's on the first stage.

The car's the star

The best hidden addition to *Sega Rally* is the Lancia Stratos. This is an accurate representation of the car that swept the board in rallies all over the world during the Seventies and, being rear-wheel drive, it means you have to radically alter your driving style to have any success with it.

The Stratos only becomes available once you win the Championship (i.e. first place on the Lakeside track) with the game difficulty set on Normal or above. It's significantly faster in a straight line than the Toyota Celica or Lancia Delta (the default cars) but slower to accelerate and a real handful around corners. So different is the Stratos to drive that it massively extends the life of the game as a whole. Its inclusion was a masterstroke by Sega and a real object lesson in how to successfully port arcade games for home use.

Destruction Derby 2 offers three different cars, one for each league – Rookie, Amateur and Pro. Although they look fairly similar, the cars increase in acceleration and top speed at the expense of handling and grip. There'd be no real point in using the Pro car as a beginner even if you could, as the iffy handling marks it out as an experts-only vehicle. Once you're in the first division, however, you'll really need its acceleration and speed if you're to win any races.

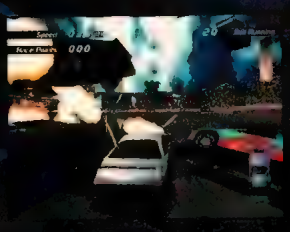
PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

Sega Rally: The best racing game ever. But not quite on the PC. And with enormous system requirements. Damn! **84%**

Destruction Derby: A lesser game. Better presented. And better optimised. You choose between the two. **83%**

EXTREME PUNISHMENT FOR CARS.

EXTREME PLEASURE FOR GAMERS.



PlayStation

PC CD ROM

PSYGNOSIS

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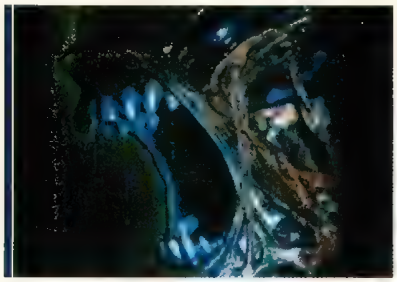
DESTRUCTION
DERBY
2

Alien Trilogy

Publisher	Acclaim
Developer	Probe
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£45
Minimum System	486DX2/66, 8Mb, x2 CD-ROM
Recommended	Pentium 90
Sound Support	SoundBlaster compatibles
Release Date	Out now

Careful now. One step at a time. Watch your backs. I said watch your... Oh my God! What was that? Arggghh.



"I know intelligence isn't a must for the marines, but I'm on your side. The aliens are over there."

Chitinous

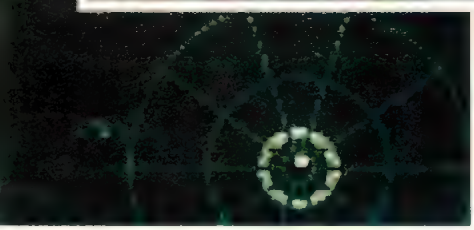
IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THE Alien films and the first-person action game seem made for each other: a match made in deepest, darkest space. Take the films. Apart from the obligatory cannon fodder, all you've got is one unfeasibly tall and seriously hard woman, miles and miles of dank, claustrophobic corridors, a cool arsenal of weaponry and those things: the Xenomorphs. The first instalment, Alien, is one of the scariest films ever made, so what's it going to be like living the nightmare through 34 rip-snorting action-packed levels?

Er. A bit disappointing really. *Alien Trilogy* was a success on the PlayStation – but now it's starting to show its age. We've come a long way since the giddy, heady days of *Wolfenstein 3D*. The flat levels of *Doom* have admitted defeat to *Duke Nukem*, which in turn has bowed down to the seminal 3D inner sanctum of *Quake*. Realism is everything. You can run, jump, look up and down, change your trousers. I don't need to tell you because you've played it for yourself. *Alien Trilogy* is a backward step into those long gone days of 2D and it feels restricted and boring.

> *"A backward step into those long gone days of 2D."*

"Yeah but what about the cool weapons?" Not present or correct. Apart from the shotgun, you've got a smart gun (a pretty cool rapid-fire piece), a pulse rifle (a less cool rapid-fire piece) and an unimpressive flame-thrower (which you never want to use, by the way, because it's accompanied by some God-awful speech, supposedly from Ripley herself). Save on the grenade launcher – just put your finger in your cheek and make that popping sound. There's no difference. Oh and there are a few seismic charges lying around that aren't much cop either. Nothing explodes as it should or where it should. You get more menace from a plate of macaroni.

"Okay, but the aliens are really scary aren't they?" 'Fraid not. In the films they fly around with the sort of speed and ferocity that Geiger intended. The creatures in *Alien Trilogy* have got more in common with the cast of One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest, tending to shuffle around in an aimless fashion, sometimes stopping altogether. Blood curdling screams? You're pulling my leg. The warriors sound like neighing horses, the face-huggers are a laugh and the chest-bursters open their mouths and say "fluffffff" in a not very menacing fashion. At the end of each episode you get the 'hardcore' mother alien bitch-type things, but unfortunately they're easily dispatched and cunningly similar to each other. It's frightening stuff – if you work for Acclaim that is.



It's not all bad. Had it been released 18 months ago, *Trilogy* would have been a very respectable game. To its credit, the radar system works well and goes some way towards emulating the atmosphere of the film. When it starts telling you that you're surrounded by a gang of aliens and you don't know whether they're behind locked doors or about to slam (sorry shuffle) towards you, the old heart rate does begin to rise a bit – it's just a shame that they don't burst out or drop from the ceilings.

In fact the best bit about the whole game is the music, which is absolutely stunning, generating the sort of atmosphere that's lacking elsewhere. The end-of-episode screens are packed with exactly the right sort of full-on sounds and the general ambience added to each level is spot on. In fact the music's put me in such a good mood that I'm going to be a bit kind to *Alien Trilogy* and say that if you really, really like the films (and this game is loosely based around elements from all three), then you'll probably get something out of this game.

It's got a multi-player option, but, rather strangely, this is restricted to Network only. And how many hard working, honest people have access to one of these without a satanic boss breathing over their shoulders brandishing an Instant Dismissal notice? It's not even worth connecting a mate's PC up as the levels aren't best suited to frenetic action anyway, with too many similar-looking maze-like tunnels to lose yourself in. And, of course, it's not open-ended, so there are no wads to add on or tweaks to tweak. Once you've finished, you've finished.

Now *Quake* on the other hand... Okay, I suppose comparing this to one of the best games in the world is a trifle unfair, so I won't. *Duke* spits on it from a great height. In fact the game engines of *Rise Of The Triads* (remember that?) and *Dark Forces* would get my vote over this game, and both of these are now available as budget buys.

In the films, Ripley builds up an intense hatred of the Xenomorphs: "I've known you so long I can't remember a time when you weren't in my life." After playing 34 levels of this game I know how she feels and remember – in a review, no-one can hear you scream.. with boredom.

DAVID WOODS

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

H.R. Geiger didn't dredge up his worst nightmares to be converted into a poor game in an unforgiving genre.

53%

Realms Of The Haun

Publisher	Gremlin
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£45
Minimum System	Pentium, 8Mb RAM
Recommended	P100, 16Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now

Things liven up considerably once you've found a gun and headed into the catacombs. Not for him, though.

Spirited

3D graphics, adventuring and video fuse together into a magnificent – if rather sprawling – whole.

REALMS OF THE HAUNTING, which we've been looking forward to eagerly here at PC GAMER, is best described as *Hexen* crossed with *Broken Sword* with just a hint of *Wing Commander III*. In other words, it's a 3D-engined, Knights-Templar-based point-and-click adventure that's punctuated by video clips.

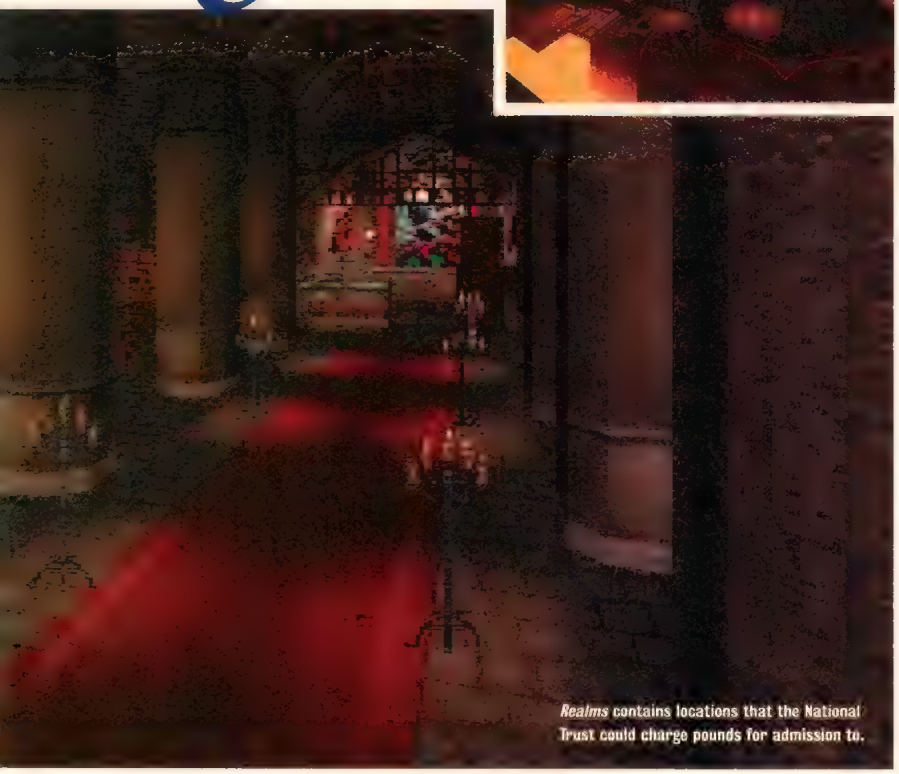
Do peer carefully into any crates you spot lying around. They invariably contain extra stuff, although it's often easy to miss.

So if it later goes on to become a bit frustrating and dull in places, it's not for lack of ambition. In fact, concept-wise it's one of the boldest PC gaming moves for some time.

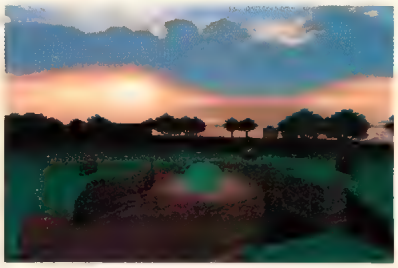
And it's at its very boldest right at the beginning. After a video intro showing your character arriving at a spooky mansion to which he's been drawn by weird dreams involving his recently deceased father, you find yourself standing in an immaculately furnished study. Books line the walls, a grandfather clock ticks steadily in the corner, an antique desk sits before the bay window, and an expensive-looking carpet covers the floor. (I felt immediately at home.) And as you wander around, it all moves smoothly in 3D, still looking smashing, albeit having to be restricted to VGA-resolution on my venerable P75. I can't remember seeing anything this detailed on the PC before.

Then, with all that taken in, it's time to explore the point-and-clicking side of things. As well as irksome *Doom* style keyboard controls for movement (alternatively you can hold down various mouse buttons to enable the mouse to move you about, but your gun keeps going off by mistake and it doesn't work nearly as well as a proper *Quake*-style system would have), there's a mouse pointer which changes when you swish it over bits of the scenery to alert you to things that can be examined and employed. Four floor-standing candelabras in the first

ting



Realms contains locations that the National Trust could charge pounds for admission to.



Cor. Running only on awful PCs, *Realms* wouldn't grab, of course, so the pics are from Gremlin. Haven't seen this.

Crumbs. Your character looks almost excited in this video clip. He'll doubtless calm down again in a minute.

room, for example, can be lit to invoke your father's ghost who explains, via more video, that he's being somehow held prisoner in the spirit world and needs rescuing. Doors can be clicked on to open them, stray diaries and keys can be clicked to add them to your inventory, and monsters can be clicked on to kill them.

Monsters, yes. Every so often there's a bestial growl or a rattling of bones and a monster comes loping into view. Initially these must be hacked at with a sword, but presently guns of various sizes can be found, and then, as you get further caught up in *Realms'* world of magic and legend, there are *Hexen*-style staffs that launch balls of coloured flame. The monsters, though, are desperately stupid – they always come straight for you – and only ever appear in twos and threes, so they rarely present a problem. And, compromising the game's overall graphical sophistication, they're made of flat sprites rather than solid 3D polygons. In fact, it's difficult to see the point of most of them, except to fill *Realms'* emptier corridors.

Anyway, though. Further exploration of the house (taking in plenty more smashing graphical effects, like mirrors in which you can see your reflection à la *Duke Nukem*, windows that provide a view over the grounds, and candles casting flickering light over walls) reveals some stairs leading into the basement.

It starts to get a bit scary now.

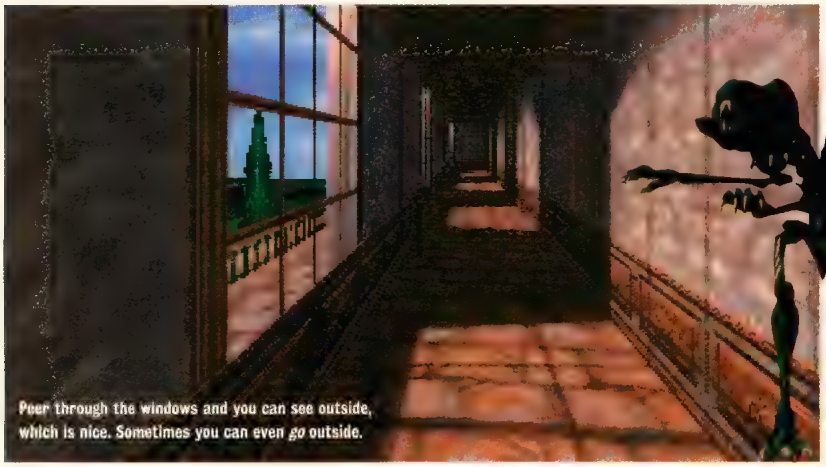
The basement turns out to consist of an enormous network of caverns and temples, constructed in a range of styles and inhabited, of course, by a light sprinkling of monsters. You'll find some delightful architecture down here, with columns, high ceilings, statues, altars and gilt ornamentation, and exploring it all is great fun in a slightly nerve-wracking sort of way. Strange orbs unlock doors to rooms full of extra ammo, rivers of glowing lava gloop gently, stone slabs slide aside, and suspicious-looking pentagrams dare you to step into them.

"Concept-wise it's one of the boldest PC gaming moves for some time."

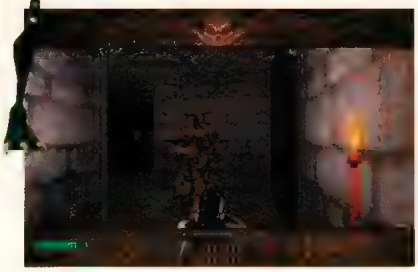
And you'll meet a range of other characters, none of whom seem quite normal. Perhaps the least weird, though still decidedly odd, is Rebecca, who sort of turns up suddenly from nowhere, claims to have special powers and announces she'll accompany you for the rest of the game and help out. While she appears in the video clips, though, I couldn't see her in the 3D bits, so I can only assume she was hiding cleverly behind me, even though I did try turning round really quickly a couple of times.

Realms Of The Haunting really ought to be frightening and exciting, then. But, well, 'mildly intriguing' is about as good as it ever seems to get.

The text-based side of things doesn't help. There are documents and books lying around all over the place which are full of background information detailing the strange world of alternative universes and demons which brought about your father's downfall and which you must now penetrate in order to save him. But they're represented as large bitmaps – so large they won't fit on the screen, and must be scrolled around awkwardly to be read. And they're clumsily written, trying to sound classically eloquent but constantly mistaking 'it's' for 'its'. Nevertheless, I dutifully pored over each one, assuming them to ☛



Peer through the windows and you can see outside, which is nice. Sometimes you can even *go* outside.



be filled with essential clues, only to realise, gradually, that they're merely padding, and can largely be ignored. The idea, presumably, is to add substance to the story line, but instead they just kill its momentum.

Worse than that, though, are the video clips. Now, video used sparingly can be fine. Look at *Fade To Black*. And *Realms'* video is certainly sparing, only occurring at significant points in the story. It's also technically excellent, combining actors cleverly with computer-generated backgrounds in a way that blends them and the real-time 3D bits into a seamless whole.

But what on Earth was the director thinking? The actors spend half their time gazing around sleepily at nothing at all, and the rest of it mumbling the most awful lines. ("Dragons seem to be the current theme around here" when someone presumably meant "recurrent".) They seem entirely oblivious to the computer-generated effects going on around them – understandably, perhaps, if they were overlaid afterwards. It's all a bit embarrassing.

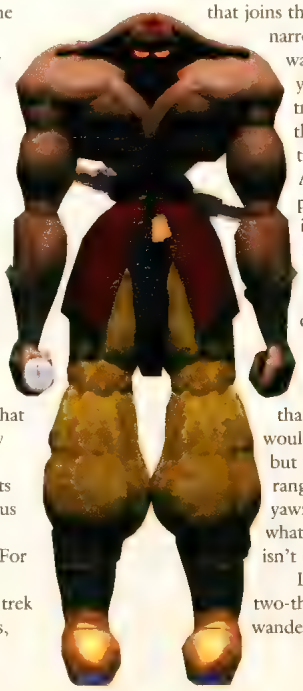
Worst of all, though, is the wandering around.

Realms Of The Haunting progresses in a largely linear fashion – a puzzle is solved, and the route to the next puzzle is opened. You might need to activate a moving platform to lift you up so you can reach a key that's stuck to the ceiling and open the door to another bit, for example, or pull some levers to move the hands on a clock to open a further door. It's always just one thing at a time, though, which is the only way it can be in a game that wants to convey a strong story line, and that's fine.

But the 'doing things' bits are spread thinly over enormous areas – networks of rooms, or sprawling mazes of corridors. For instance, there's a desperately awful bit where you've got to trek around a series of dark caverns, where you can only see about six feet in front of you and therefore have no idea where you're going, trying to locate a gem stone. (You're provided with a map, but it's one of those cursed too-big-to-fit-on-the-screen bitmaps again, and accessing it involves pressing 'I' to bring up the inventory, clicking on the 'documents' section, right-clicking on the map, watching it unfurl slowly in FMV, scrolling to the correct area, clicking it away again, clicking the inventory away and then trying to remember which way it said to go. And then a stupid monster attacks you, and you forget where you were and have to do the whole thing again.) And – oh dear – the Tower itself, the bit that joins the four Realms, is a series of narrow and confusingly laid-out walkways suspended in space that you die if you fall off, making travelling between the Realms – the whole point of the game – a tediously frustrating business. And then, although the puzzles proceed one at a time, the map isn't linear at all, and you must revisit areas you've already explored. The game therefore degenerates frequently into depressing *Hexen*-style trawls of the playing area, with you not knowing where to go or what to do next. It might be imagined that your companion, Rebecca, would be able to offer some advice, but while she'll happily discuss a vast range of subjects with you at yawnsome length, the question of what the two of you might do next isn't one of them.

> ***"Unlocking a door and entering a new area is tremendously exciting."***

In fact, I reckon I spent about two-thirds of my time with *Realms* wandering around miles of empty rooms and corridors trying to work out what I was meant to do next, and only a third actually having fun, which isn't an ideal balance.



But then, there's so much good stuff here. Unlocking a door and entering a new area is tremendously exciting. Will it be another huge temple with a vaulted ceiling and incredibly ornate furnishings? Will there be special effects, like the mysteriously shimmering portals in the Tower, or the clouds racing beneath the walkway to the clock room, or the planets in the sky through the window of the observatory (including, intriguingly, Earth)? Will you find another, even more powerful weapon lying, for example, under a bed? The story line is generally intriguing (although that's probably enough Knights Templar games) with characters who seem dodgy but then turn out to be goodies.

Oh, but then there's this *terrible* bit where you've got to step across a series of moving blocks, like in a platform game from 1984, and, as if this wasn't annoying enough in itself, if you slip off there's a laughing sound effect.

I'd planned to play *Realms* through to the end, but after spending a weekend with it, and getting no further than the second of the four CDs, I'm afraid it's lost me. I've enjoyed bits of it very much, and I'm eager to see what the other Realms are like. But it seems to become more and more of an uphill struggle, and simply not worth all the wandering around. Perhaps you have more patience.

JONATHAN DAVIES

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

***Realms Of The Haunting* is ambitious, atmospheric, a bit boring, and unlike anything else on the PC.**

71%

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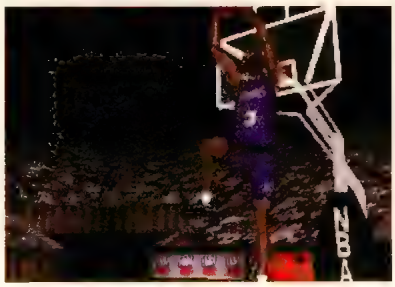
NBA Live 97

Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	EA Sports
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£45
Minimum System	486DX/66, 8Mb, x4 CD-ROM, SVGA
Recommended	P133, 16Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major sound cards
Release Date	Out now

Steals, blocks, turn-overs... check out the stats at half-time or watch some lovely ladies do a bit of dancing.



Slammin', jammin', whammin' and bammin'. Load up a copy of NBA Live 97 and let's play ball...

NEVER LET IT BE SAID THAT the guys at EA Canada don't know which side their corporate bread is buttered. Their popular *NHL Hockey*, *FIFA Soccer*, *Madden* and *NBA Live* sports series look like they'll run forever and now, hot on the texture-mapped, Gouraud-shaded heels of the old 96 batch, has come the even more texture-mapped, Gouraud-shaded, Phong-tinted 97 line-up. The new *NHL Hockey 97* is hotter than a swim in a volcano, *NHL 97* is brilliant, while *FIFA Soccer 97* isn't half bad. *NBA Live 97* is pretty good too. It's not going to break the basketball mould, but it does chip a bit off and cause a fair degree of scratching.

If you've played an EA Sports game before, you'll know that the presentation (i.e. the menus, the music, the video snippets, etc.) is absolutely stunning. But basketball is just basketball. You run from one end of the court to the other, trying to throw a ball through a small, metal hoop, while the crowd cheers and the commentator shouts "Boom Shakalak!" or something similar. All the new 97 version does is draw the action with bigger, better and altogether flashier graphics. Forget sprites, in *NBA Live 97* you get to control a team of *Quake* blokes wearing shorts and vests. Ah, if only there was an option to give them rocket launchers...

Like the old 96 version, in *NBA Live 97* you can play a one-off exhibition match between any two teams, or choose to guide a team through an entire basketball season. To cater for the novice and pro-player alike, there are three difficulty levels and two distinct modes of play. In the Arcade mode, players never tire or get injured, while in Simulation every option in the game is switched on to create the ultimate digital jam. You can pick any one of eight different camera angles to view the action, adjust the graphic detail, change the controller set-up (you can use a gamepad, joystick, keyboard, even the mouse), as well as view a dizzyingly sad array of facts and information on the top NBA stars. If you didn't realise it already, *NBA Live 97* is a stat-freak's wet dream. But the free encyclopaedia isn't the fun part.

As the funky soundtrack pounds away in the background, there's an agonising wait as the gorgeousness of EA's Virtual Stadium technology is shoehorned into every spare byte of your PC's memory. And if you've got a fast PC, the wait seems to be well worth it. *NBA Live 97* looks fabulous; streets ahead of the old *NBA Live 96* and dual carriageways in front of *NBA Live 95*. It plays a fun, frantic and worryingly realistic game of 'ball'. The superbly animated 3D blokes slam, spin and dunk their way through the four quarters. Ice-white sneakers squeak realistically on wooden floorboards that are so polished you can see the reflection of the spotlights in them. The crowd roars, intelligent and quick slow-mo replays allow you to relive spectacular scores, while the

Dunked

commentator urges the players on with a seamless stream of enthusiastic babble. This is as real as basketball on the PC is likely to get. At least until the inevitable arrival of *NBA Live 98*.

A simple attacking control system (just click button A to pass, tap button B to shoot) makes getting into the action easy, while the half-time stat run down lets you break down the number of assists, blocks, steals and turnovers that each team has had. *NBA Live 97* is a hugely comprehensive game that takes the bare bones of the previous incarnations and gives them the equivalent of a weekend in an expensive health farm. Needless to say, if you're

"You get to control a team of Quake *blokes wearing shorts and vests."*

looking for a basketball sim that can give you all the fantasy excitement of *NBA Jam*, *NBA Live 97* isn't for you, but for the more arcade sim fan this is as perfect as basketball gets.

Or is it? If you haven't got a PC with the processing oomph to make the most of this graphically intensive game, then there's really little to recommend it. Admittedly, there's a network and modem option, but if you have to turn down the detail levels to bump up the speed, the 97 version has nothing over the old 96 flavour. Just as every new flight sim simulates the same planes with newer and prettier 3D graphics, *NBA Live 97* offers a visual leap rather than enhanced gameplay. The rules of basketball don't change and so the way that *NBA Live 97* plays is similar to 96 and 95.

The big selling point, as ever, is the game's graphics, and there's no denying that they're lovelier than a very lovely thing. But although the TV-style production (there's even a half-time show to watch, with dancing cheerleaders and a selection of impressive dunks and slams) should catapult *NBA Live 97* up into the PC GAMER stratosphere, it doesn't have the same instant, 'let's crowd around the monitor', 'Hey, I want to play' type of appeal. Maybe this is because we're just not huge fans of basketball over here and maybe it's because this 97 version is a dolled-up rehash of 96. Basketball fans will doubtless ignore the criticisms, but casual gamers should try before they buy.

DEAN EVANS

Play *NBA Live 97* as an arcade game or belly-flop into a full season's action, picking players and designing plays.

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

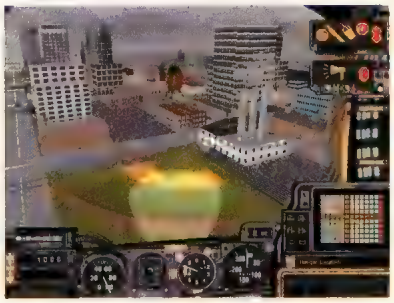
An all-singing, all-jumping basketball game that needs a hefty Pentium PC to get the best out of it.

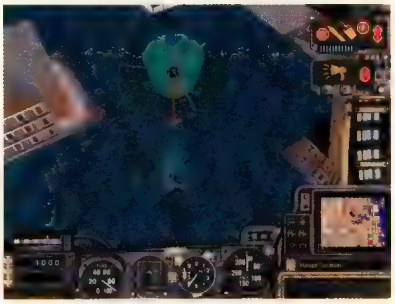
80%

SimCopter

Publisher	Maxis
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£40
Minimum System	486DX, 16Mb RAM, Win95
Recommended	Pentium 166
Sound Support	Any Windows sound card
Release Date	Out now

Come fly with us, again, in the never-ending franchise that is *SimCity*. Only this time it's from above.





(Top) The patch of light from your, er, spotlight. In the daytime. (Top-right) A commonplace sight, of course, in every city. (Bottom-right) Landing, eyes downwards.

Rotary

HOW WE LAUGHED. HOW WE chortled, guffawed, snickered and tittered when, long ago, Maxis announced plans to unify its Sim games. So, for example, you'd be able to take a town made in *SimCity* and use it in *SimFarm*; or use a *SimLife* planet as a *SimCity* backdrop.

You might think, then, that we'd be laughing on the other side of our collective face right now. For in *SimCopter* your job is to police the skies of a 3D SimCity, keeping order and helping out the citizens, and said city can be imported from either *SimCity 2000* or *Classic*. But no, we're still hugely, annoyingly smug, because to be frank: it's really not very good.

What happens is this. As a sort of aerial policeman come taxi come emergency service, you're paid to roam the airspace of a city and sort out those little urban problems that crop up from time to time. Finishing a job results in points and more importantly money, with which you can MAKE YOUR CHOPPER BIGGER (snigger) and GET HOLD OF SOME GREAT EQUIPMENT (fnarr). To begin with, you're armed with a megaphone, for blaring messages to the populace, and a water pump/bucket for dousing fires. Later, you can acquire a rescue harness and a tear gas unit.

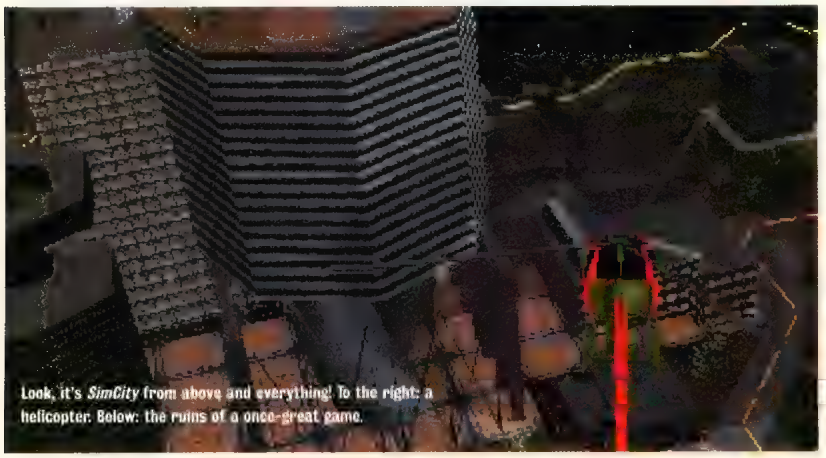
There are eight types of mission, and for most you're expected to call on the aid of the city's normal emergency services. A traffic jam can be cleared by ordering the cars to take a detour, or by dispatching a police car to the area. For fires, you need to fill up your bucket from a nearby lake and quench the flames, while alerting the fire service. Then there are rescues from runaway trains, medical evacuations, fleeing criminals, riots and rich folk wanting a lift to other parts of town.

> *"The splendour of* SimCity *is totally lost here."*

Flying the copter is relatively easy, thank God, though landing it is usually a swearfest. Yes, you can walk around the town, and even enter some buildings – well, one: your own hangar/operations base.

For a Sim game, then, this is relatively straightforward. And, it has to be said, extremely boring after a (short) while. The splendour of *SimCity* is totally lost here, mostly due to the astoundingly dire graphics. Sure, they look quite pretty when you're high up and in high res, but wandering about on the ground reveals a sorry state of affairs: stickmen and Atari 2600 trees, for God's sake. Once you've done one of each mission, it all starts getting a little repetitive. And the fact that you can use any of your favourite, hard-built cities doesn't really matter a damn, because they all look the same (terrible) from above. And another thing, unless you're packing a P166 you won't get much of a frame rate even at low res.

So. Nice idea, mixing up these Sim things, but it's not going to get very far if the results are like this. It's not a great copter game, it's certainly not a Sim... it's not anything much, just an ugly mess. ED RICKETTS



Look, it's *SimCity* from above and everything! To the right: a helicopter. Below: the ruins of a once-great game.

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

In SimWorld, there are SimHits (*SimCity*) and SimMisses (*SimLife*). Guess which category this falls into?

59%

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The Time Warp of Dr Brain

Publisher	Sierra
Developer	Coktel
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£28
Minimum System	486DX/66, 8Mb RAM, SVGA
Recommended	Pentium, x4 CD-ROM, 16Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now

We've been eagerly awaiting this all year. Or so the press release would have us believe.

Simple

IF I TOLD YOU TO PUT YOUR hands on your head, and then asked you for £28, you'd probably assume that I was mugging you, rather than trying to sell you a computer game largely based on variations of Simple Simon. And if I was Sierra's marketing division, you'd be right.

Dr Brain is an appalling collection of puzzles that doesn't even deserve the half a CD-ROM it comes on (the other half is the Mac version of the game, always a sign of a sure-fire winner). There are ten different puzzles, three different difficulty levels and a rather novel intro screen where you choose the option you want by playing a game of Space Invaders and shooting flying saucers representing 'new game' or 'quit' or whatever. This intro screen is easily the best bit of the game and is where most of the marks have been awarded.

The ten puzzles are:

● Primordial Soup. You control an amoeba, so does the computer. Eat food and the amoebas multiply. And they can fight (this involves directing them towards each other). The best puzzle.

● Spelunking. Guide a lungfish through an underwater labyrinth before it runs out of oxygen. Avoid monsters! Collect oxygen!

● Lizards and Eggs. Keep your eggs on hot, er, holes in the ground by running around hilariously. When the hole goes cold, click on it and watch as your lizard runs over and picks up the egg. Click on a hot hole and the lizard runs there and puts the egg down. What a hoot!

● Beaver Dam. Build a dam across the river. Avoid logs. And turtles. And fish. And rats (or whatever they are). Collect twigs.

● Caveman Rock. Simple Simon with music

● Monkey See, Monkey Do. Play a simple word game by placing letters on a grid to spell words, half of which the computer won't recognise.

● Alchemy. Simple Simon, again. Only made complicated.

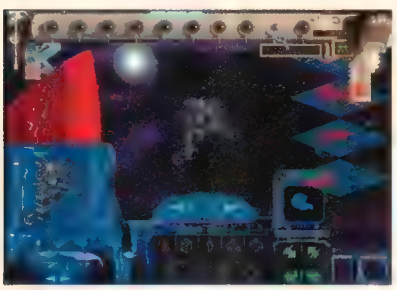
● Gridlock. Set the switches to guide the car through the maze.

● Spaceshop. Copy the picture. Essentially Simple bloody Simon again.

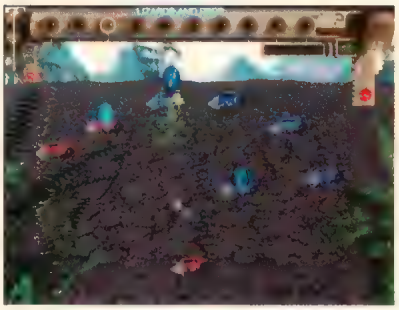
● Brainwaves. Discover the logic relationships by listening to twaddle like "Sonia is older than Keith", "Bill's favourite animal is the rhino". And the like.

So, awful puzzles, pleasingly presented it must be confessed, that seem too simplistic for an adult audience, yet are explained in such a way by the computer's voice that it took a fairly literate team of journalists several minutes to work out the instructions for each puzzle, something that would have any child under the age of 20 wandering off to the kitchen in search of crisps. Or Smarties. STEVE FARAGHER

"This intro screen is easily the best bit of the game."



See the little picture on the left? You've got to recreate that using the available components to 'win'. Aargh.



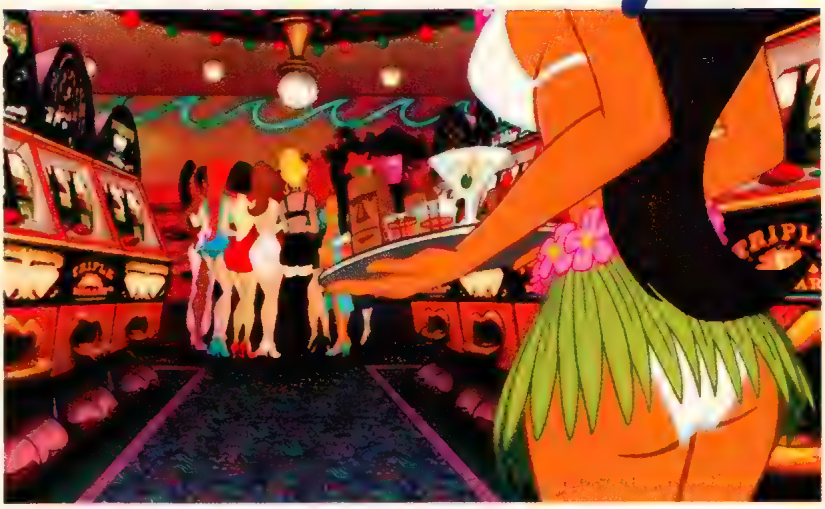
PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

Please don't buy *Dr Brain*, you'll only encourage the production of more games of this type.

22%

Leisure Suit Larry 7

Publisher	Sierra
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£45
Minimum System	486DX2/66, 8Mb RAM
Recommended	Pentium 90
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now



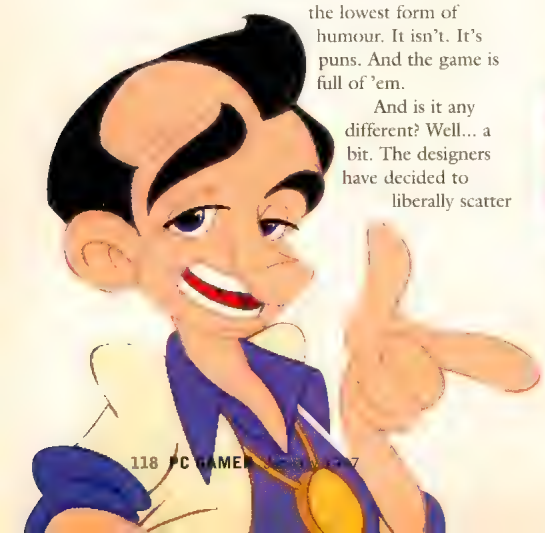
Grubby

Breasts and word play! It's the kind of combination that can only be 'winning'! Or so we thought.

THE CHEAP, SLUTTY, SEXIST filth that *is Leisure Suit Larry* has always managed to somehow drag its shabby, flabby frame through the murky waters of just-good-enough-to-warrant-a-sequel-city, with only PC GAMER ever realising the true, truly horrifying reality: it is rubbish.

It is rubbish for one soul-shattering reason: it appeals to fools. If that's you, I heartily apologise, but the fact remains: you are a fool. If I had gone to school with you, I would have thumped you. Then I'd have pulled the bandaged specs from your cold, unconscious face and hosed you down with chilly, cleansing water to try and rid the classroom of that strange, TCP-like smell you always carried around with you. WHY wait eagerly for each and every sequel? WHY rush out and buy the things from gleeful shop owners? WHY play the bloody game in your sordid, rancid, darkened back-bedrooms at all? Tschah. Fool.

The seventh in this most banal and grotesque series does little to complement the quite-okay, reasonably funny-if-you've-been-at-your-mate's-mum's-sherry-and-you'll-be-thirteen-next-July memory of the first. Larry is on a boat. Larry walks around the boat looking at breasts. But is it funny? They say sarcasm is the lowest form of humour. It isn't. It's puns. And the game is full of 'em.



And is it any different? Well... a bit. The designers have decided to liberally scatter certain... um... 'objects'... around the game to thrust you into a computerised version of those Where's Wally? books you can buy for considerably less money and have considerably more fun with. If that's not patronising enough for you, you also get a Scratch 'n' Sniff card with the disc, which allows you to immerse yourself in that leisurely Larry ambience you'd really rather do without.

"Grubby, barely-veiled sexism."

But – hey! – it's all good, clean, harmless fun, isn't it? I mean – ISN'T IT? Eh! EH? Nooo! It is *not* good, clean, harmless fun. It is grubby, barely veiled sexism where all women are called things like Captain Thigh and all feminists are lesbians. Cheap, easy jibes and jabs and some of the most uneventful adventures since The Moomins only drag the lovely graphics and the sparky, crisp sound riiiight the way down to the bottom of the barrel, where they're free to grate and scrape to their heartless content. Please. I am begging you. If you only buy one game this year, make sure it's better than *Leisure Suit Larry 7*. It is a pointless mountain of toss.

DANNY WALLACE

A choice of girls to suit everyone's palate. No dice, son, girls like this just don't exist. Thank God.

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

"Pointless mountain of toss" says it all, really.

23%

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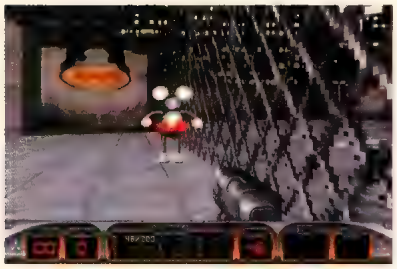
Duke Nukem 3D Plut

Publisher	GT
Developer	3D Realms
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£20
Minimum System	486/66, 8Mb RAM
Recommended	16Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now

The two new monsters. Above is the pig in a tank, and to the right is a dormant alien.

Glowing



(Top) It's a mechanical mouse from the Babe World level. And I can't kill him. Gagh.
(Above) Spooky alien goings-on. How very X-Files.

Eleven new levels for Duke to crash, bang, wallop and shoot his way through, the lucky dog.

THERE'RE A LOT OF THEM about. New levels for *Duke Nukem*, that is. There're loads of them on the Internet, for a start. We put them on CD GAMER every issue. There're CDs of them available in the shops. And now there are some official ones. Of them.

Duke Nukem 3D is one of the most popular computer games ever. It may not be as frightening as *Doom*, it may not be as sophisticated as *Quake*, but its toilet humour and sense of fun have endeared it to a huge swathe of gamers.

So, it's understandable that 3D Realms want to have a piece of the cake they, after all, created. Hence the *Plutonium Pak;* basically a new episode of *Duke*, featuring 11 new levels and some other stuff (detailed in the panel below), and costing £20. Except that it's a wee bit more than that. What this CD actually does is update your version of *Duke Nukem* to 1.4, identical to the new Atomic version which is probably in the shops by the time you read this. It only works with the registered version, of course. Once you've done the updating and you load *Duke* up, you'll see two new options. One is to play the game on Sierra's TEN network (providing you have the modem and all that) and the other is to play the new episode, called 'The Birth'.

The new episode features the return of the aliens, forcing a rather annoyed Duke to have to give up his vacation and go and sort them out. There're some really superb new levels in here, with lots of new artwork which immediately sets them above most of the MAPs available from elsewhere. They're the sort of levels that remind you why *Duke* is so much fun – Duke Burger springs to mind as an example of this. *Duke*'s levels are like real places; you half-know the layout of this burger bar already, because it's like your local McDonald's. No other game seems to do this (have you ever been in a building that's

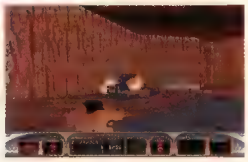
onium Pak

What is it?

So what exactly do you get for your money?

- Eleven new levels designed by 3D Realms with lots of new artwork.
- A new weapon, the Microwave Gun. This is a hardware upgrade to the Shrink Ray, and superheats baddies (or other players, of course), until they expand and pop disgustingly.
- Two new enemies. A pig-cop in a tank (devastatingly powerful) and an alien (fast and deadly).
- Two new animated shorts, one at the beginning and one at the end.
- New music for each of the eleven levels.
- A new boss alien, the Queen.
- Lots of new Duke witticisms.
- Two *Duke Nukem 3D* Windows95 desktop themes.
- The *Duke Nukem 3D* Screensaver and Entertainment Pack.
- Access to TEN (Sierra's on-line gaming network).

All the familiar mayhem is there, along with one or two rather unusual locations.



anything like the first level of *Quake?* No, of course not). These levels are tough, too, packed with monsters and traps that are going to keep the best *Duke* player wondering what's coming next. And every level is good, it's not just some of them. And there's some great inventiveness shown, particularly in 'Babe World', which is filled with mechanical Mickey Mouse-alikes who scare the living daylights out of me, and in the climactic level 'Area 51' (in real life supposedly the secret USAF base where they store the aliens and machines that have crashed on the Earth).

So the *Platinum Pak*'s good, but it's not cheap (it costs just under two quid a level, after all). Buy it if you can afford it.

STEVE FARAGHER

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

Excellent, but unfortunately rather expensive fun in a familiar style. Probably worth it, though.

80%

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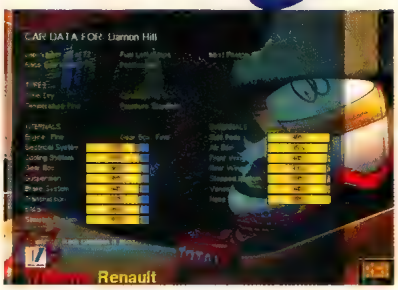
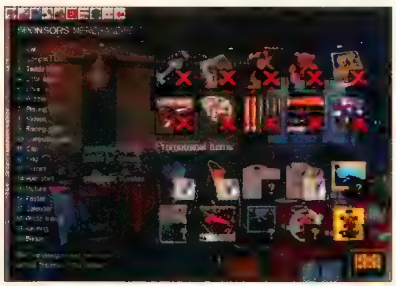
Grand Prix Manager

Publisher	MicroProse
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£45
Minimum System	486/33, 4Mb RAM
Recommended	Pentium
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now



Authentic

A year after the release of *Grand Prix Manager*, we find out what its sequel has to offer.



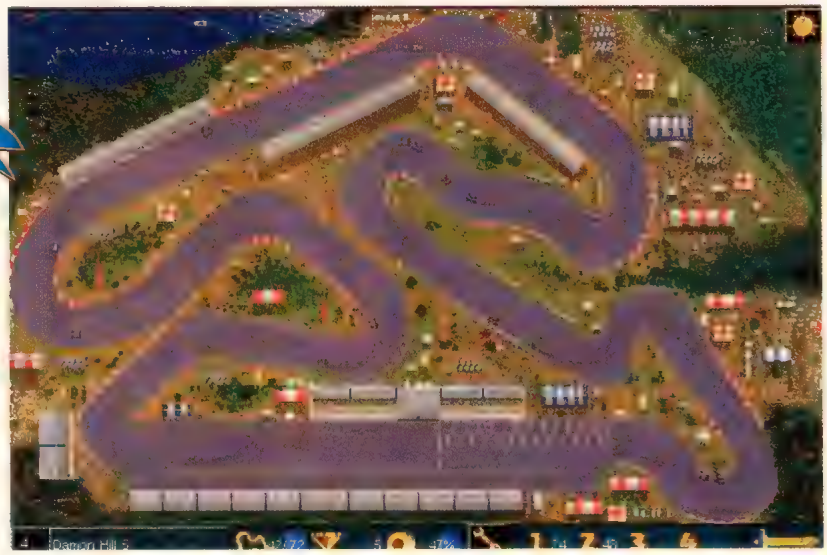
IF YOU'RE A GRAND PRIX FAN AND you haven't discovered the original *Grand Prix Manager*, then you should scourge yourself mightily and don the sackcloth of despair, because you've missed out on a cracker. A comprehensive, if slightly academic, strategy simulation of Formula One management, it was rightly awarded a commendable 80% in PCG 26. Hot on the heels of a fascinating racing season and a new British world champion in Damon Hill, comes *Grand Prix Manager 2*, and the chance for *GPM* veterans to flex their management muscles all over again.

Even for someone new to the game, it shouldn't come as a shock to discover that *GPM2* puts you in charge of one of this season's eleven Formula One teams. However, what will perhaps surprise you is the astonishing breadth of your new responsibilities. Whether you choose one of the big guns like Williams or one of the minnows like Footwork, you'll find yourself in complete control of your team and able to influence every aspect of its operation as you seek that elusive constructors championship.

You'll soon discover that everyone knows the winning driver on race day, but few people realise the amount of work that goes on behind

2

GAME OF DISTINCTION
PC GAMER
January 1997



(Above) A sponsorship deal adds a few logos to the driver's lid and some cash to your coffers. (Right) Halfway through the race and we're still in contention.

the scenes to forge a successful Formula One team. You've got to keep at the forefront of R&D, marshalling your engineers, mechanics and designers to constantly improve the car, choose your best driving team, negotiate sponsorship deals, manufacture parts, sign maintenance contracts, invest in testing facilities, keep track of rule changes... I could go on, but you get the idea. It's a very demanding job, and *GPM2* certainly paints a comprehensive picture of what it must be like to be in Frank Williams' position.

But then so did the original game. *GPM2* needs to improve over its illustrious predecessor. Well, slip on your overalls, slide it over an inspection pit and you'll soon discover that *GPM2* has undergone a thorough image overhaul and has emerged, waxed and gleaming, into pole position. The graphics have been tuned to perfection and the background screens feature some sumptuous F1 pictures, courtesy of Autosport magazine. You'll also find the interface has been radically improved and *GPM2*'s new, refined presentation really does enhance the atmosphere of the game.

One of the problems in the original *GP Manager* was that although you could gather a veritable wealth of data on your team's performance, you often struggled to find the best way to implement it. *GPM2* really distinguishes itself with an improved level of feedback, both in general team management and out on the track. Now you can see exactly how your decisions affect the performance of the team, and this additional responsiveness substantially improves the feeling of being in control. Without sacrificing authenticity, *GPM2* dispenses with some of the more annoying and fiddly components of the first game and introduces a more realistic financial structure, which provides a better balance, while still proving a testing, strategic challenge.

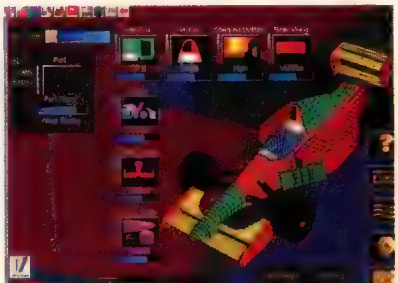
> *"The new, refined presentation really does enhance the atmosphere."*

Out on the track and the race format retains the same perfectly adequate overhead view, but adds quite a few tasty options which appear as separate little windows, enabling you to closely monitor your progress. Sterling Moss provides a decent, varied commentary (although he's not as excitable as Murray Walker) and there's improved telemetry and TV coverage and an authentic big race feel, which is complemented by a good soundtrack and effects.

As the racing weekend begins, a real sense of tension develops as you wait to see if all those weeks of testing and preparation have paid off. You hone your car to peak efficiency for qualifying, which is bad enough, but the race itself is an utter nail biter, as you experiment with the full range of set-up and pit strategies. You'll experience intense nervousness as the cars sit on the grid, utter despair as your lead driver spins off the track with two laps to go and, eventually, smug satisfaction as you achieve a one-two combination on the winner's rostrum to clinch the constructors championship. Strategy games which grip you in this way are a rare breed indeed, and there's no denying that *GPM2* is compulsive stuff.

JOHN HOULIHAN

The qualifying sessions are particularly fraught as you struggle to gain a place on the front row.



In the workshop you can tinker with the nuts and bolts of your car's structure to your heart's content.

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

Grand Prix Manager 2 is authoritative and difficult to fault. A splendid follow-up all-round.

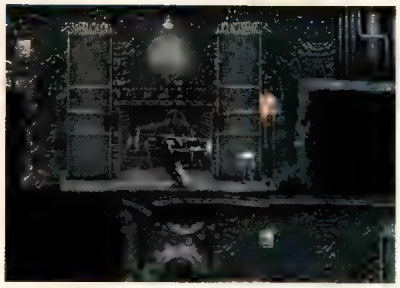
85%

Hunter Hunted

Publisher	Sierra
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£40
Minimum System	Pentium 90, 16Mb, x2 CD-ROM, Win95
Recommended	Pentium 133, gamepad
Sound Support	All Windows 95 cards
Release Date	Out now

Time Commando was a technically excellent platform beat-'em-up flawed by limited game design. Meet _Hunter Hunted_ and take one step back.

The game is relentlessly two-dimensional. You can't tell what will pass in front of you and what won't.



One of the game's marginally more interesting enemies is this badly animated robot.

Impoverished

REMEMBER 486s? STATE-OF-the-art super PCs once upon a time. Now, though, it's Pentium this and Pentium that. And, of course, the games have improved enormously with all that extra processor power now at their disposal.

Except they haven't of course. When it comes to memory requirements and processor use, PC games designers have become, if possible, lazier than ever. *Wipeout 2097*, *Tekken 2*, *F1* beautifully slick and sickeningly playable PlayStation games have a maximum of 2Mb of screen memory to play with. How come a game as stultifying average, as black cab hackneyed, as just plain tedious as *Hunter Hunted* requires 16Mb of memory through a Pentium 90?

By making games Pentium-only, of course, games publishers hope to give the impression that their little baby is in some way state-of-the art. Any takers for that theory concerning *Hunter Hunted* should acquaint themselves with any platform beat/shoot-'em-up to have appeared on the Mega Drive, SNES or Amiga in the past couple of years. You walk, jump, crawl and climb around a bland, two-dimensional set of platforms. You shoot, punch, bazook and grenade an unconvincing set of Christmas decorations masquerading as enemies. You collect such exciting power-ups as food (extra energy), medical kits (extra life) and armour (er, extra armour). You fight an unconvincing set of badly animated boss characters. You die of boredom.

Yes, there are two different lead characters to play (a human and a minotaur-esque beasty type) but, no, there aren't really any differences between them. Yes, the game is network compatible but, no, you're unlikely to find anyone willing to give up valuable *Command & Conquer*, *Quake* or *Doom* time. Yes, there are 100 levels but, no, none of them show much originality, sound design or even reasonable size. Poor? *Hunter Hunted* makes Bob Cratchitt look like Ivanna Trump in flat shoes.

It's hard to find anything positive to say about the game. "It works." "After opting for the full 72Mb install it wasn't as criminally slow as it was with the 'minimum' and 'recommended' options." "If you've been living on planet No-Computer-Games all your life you might get some enjoyment out of it." Those are about the best I can manage. Suddenly a recuperative play of a proper Pentium game seems in order and *Time Commando* looks more appealing than ever. JAMES ASHTON

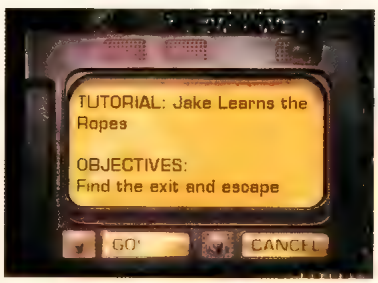
"Makes Bob Cratchitt look like Ivanna Trump in flat shoes."

Pay attention, boy

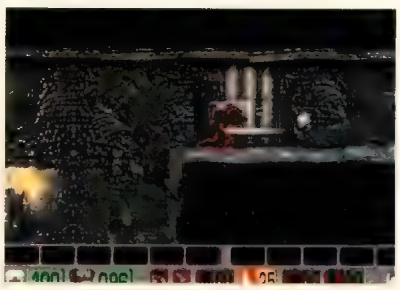
Hunter Hunted **clearly has ideas above its station. *Hunter Hunted* clearly feels that it's 'a bit special'. *Hunter Hunted* thinks its advanced game design might confuse some less experienced gamers.**

To help us, the poor foolish public, really get into the game, Sierra have thoughtfully provided an eight-level tutorial start to the game. These levels are (even) shorter than usual and introduce different elements of the game one bit at a time. Early on, the complexities of jumping are explained via on-screen text messages, later the same sort of flashed-up information reveals the complicated mysteries of crawling (press 'Down', hold it, now press Left or Right). No, really?

Apart from being extremely patronising, the tutorial actually destroys a vital part of most platform games: getting to grips with your character and experimenting to find out what to do to get out of a particular scrape. As well as being very boring, the eight-level tutorial reveals far too much of the game and leaves very little to the joy of self discovery.



Advice also pops up while you're playing. It's very annoying and largely unnecessary.



PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

Miss Average Presentation meets Mr Average game design and marry in Normaltown, Tedium County.

59%

Amok

Publisher	GT
Developer	Scavenger
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£40
Minimum System	Pentium 75, 8Mb RAM, CD-ROM
Recommended	P100, 16Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now

(Above) The spectacular explosions hint at *Amok*'s unrealised potential.

(Left) Your bot lets loose with all he's got. And that's not a lot.

It's all gone horribly wrong for Scavenger. After two years of hype their first game has arrived, and it's not exactly what we had hoped for.

Tired

AMOK. IT SOUNDS GOOD. IT sounds like gratuitous violence. Which is just fine. Nevertheless, it all seems to have got accidentally mixed up with somebody's plot, so here's what you need to know. It's 47 years after some war but nobody seems to have noticed that it's finished, because this is a shoot-'em-up and everyone you meet insists on attacking you.

You are some kind of ED-209 battle bot, but just to prove you're not the sort of killing machine to be foxed by a flight of stairs, you demonstrate your versatility by performing the first mission underwater. Your legs tuck in frogman style, and handy little propeller attachments speed you through the deep. Infested sharks float amusingly to the surface as you pop them, and other pleasingly violent touches are scattered throughout the game.

Every mission starts with a minimalist briefing, which, while hardly luxuriating in the latest special effects, at least indicates what your objectives are. These are relatively varied and challenging and generally involve eliminating key installations (by filling them full of missiles), lowering the heart rate of all enemy soldiers to zero, rescuing prisoners and the usual sort of thing. They also offer handy advice like, "remember not to tread on any mines". The tools of your trade are missiles, lasers and bombs and an extensive additional armoury if you root about the level for power-ups.

"These days such Legoland graphics just offend the eye."

Now, there's nothing wrong with blowing everything to kingdom come and collecting power-ups, but once you've driven the Dodge Viper of violence that is *Quake*, it's hard to go back to the Datsun Cherry we have here.

Like our aforementioned Japanese warrior, it seems that Scavenger have been spending too much time on remote islands lately. *Amok* is just so dated. Two years ago we tipped our caps respectfully to it and were grateful for the chance to play, but now we expect more from life. These days such Legoland graphics just offend the eye. Normally a criticism of bitmapped games is that they pixellate up close but here they just pixellate. Mountains look like 3D bar charts and the backgrounds remind me of painted Dr. Who backdrops with their poor attempt at creating depth and no parallax.

It's odd because certain elements are extremely well implemented. The big incandescent flaming gas explosions and the little ape-like soldiers who mow each other down when under pressure, for example, are always a joy to watch. Despite these saving graces the whole the game lacks those special heart-warming little touches throughout. It's hard to be excited about power-ups which have no instantly apparent special effects, and it's even harder to immerse yourself in a game where goading the enemies into a fight is a hassle. They frequently refuse to chase you beyond their allotted zones no matter how many of their mates you kill ,and if you keep strafing around them, they often fail to pivot fast enough to hit you anyway. Such things make for dull missions, a tired game and pinning up our 1997 calendars will just make Amok another year too late. MARK DONALD

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

Two years ago *Amok* would have been greeted with a hearty "Hurrah!" Now it's only worth a "Ho hum."

54%

Virtua Cop

Publisher	Sega
Developer	AM2
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£40
Minimum System	Pentium 90, 8Mb RAM, Win 95
Recommended	Pentium 133, 16Mb RAM, Win 95
Sound Support	All major sound cards
Release Date	Out Now

The wonderful, angular surrealism of *Virtua Cop* seems a lot more natural when you play it than it looks. But that's not really important. Killing is.

Penetrating

Grab a big pistol and shoot people in the kneecaps. It's not Belfast, it's *Virtua Cop*.

LET'S JUST BRING THE uninitiated up to speed, as it were. *Virtua Cop* is an arcade game. It's fourth in the Sega excitement stakes behind *Daytona*, *Sega Rally* and *Virtua Fighter*, but nevertheless it does have quite a following and it is great fun to play, thanks mainly to its curious control method. Rather than grasp a joystick or fumble with a joypad, *Virtua Cop* uses that old stalwart of the Grandstand TV game, the lightgun, allowing the player to aim at and shoot the on-screen characters much as you would in real life with a real gun, say. And that's about all there is to it. There is a half-baked plot in there somewhere, but it really is frighteningly simple to play: shoot all the baddies, avoid all the innocents.

The world of *Virtua Cop* is created entirely with polygons. It looks fantastic. But before you get carried away, wanting to climb over boxes, rampage down corridors or leap through third-storey windows, we have some bad news. You have no control over your travels whatsoever. It's as if you've been strapped into an electric wheelchair driven by an unseen henchmen, bent on getting you if not killed then at least severely grazed. So with the 'running about' bit out of your control, your job is simply to spot the bad guys and toast them before they toast you. Huge circular targets zoom in to highlight your next assailant as they take aim and fire. The three difficulty levels in the game alter the speed at which they begin firing back. And to make things a little more interesting innocent bystanders pop up regularly, flapping their limbs and begging "Don't shoot me!" Take out a civvy by mistake and you lose a life.

Occasionally you can blow up bits of the background.

Up to speed yet? 'Cos here comes the PC version. When we heard this was on the way we cocked an eyebrow or two at a curious angle and puzzled over how on earth they were going to replace the games single unique gameplay feature the lightgun. Well, your on-screen crosshair is now controlled by your choice of keyboard (hair-tearingly difficult), gamepad (a little easier) or mouse (a little, um, no, hang on a minute, this is actually quite good). Playing with the mouse is astoundingly comfortable. It's actually easier to use this method than waving some heavy bit of plastic around ever was. Reloading is a little cumbersome (requiring a double click of the other mouse button very time your six shots are spent) but it's possible to assign 'fire' to the right button, allowing you to double-click reload with your already 'click trained' index finger. A cunning two-player option is included too, where player two takes to the gamepad or keyboard and two crosshairs fly about simultaneously. The result of any competition is unfortunately a foregone conclusion. He who has the mouse wins, but it is great fun.

> *"It's lard smooth and weasel fast."*

As you can see from these shots, *Virtua Cop* looks great. Very colourful, very stylised and very arcadey. And the good news is that after the disappointingly chuggy *Daytona* and *Sega Rally* (which require God on PC to run at anything remotely resembling greasy in SVGA mode), *Virtua Cop* is a revelation. It's lard smooth and weasel fast. Even in SVGA, high detail in 16 million colours it moves without a hitch on a reasonable Pentium. If you think about it, the scenery ambles by at little more than walking speed, after all, the only things moving quickly are the characters – all in all, not a tough task for a modern PC.

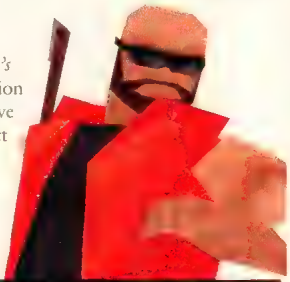
It seems that *Virtua Cop*'s only flaws are

that it's a little *too* arcade perfect. This is a game designed to be played in short rewarding 50p bursts. If you were playing in the arcades and you shuffled in a tenner's worth of shrapnel, you'd see the entire game. At home, of course, you're playing for free and with the generous lives and continues supplied (and the remarkably satisfying mouse control) I played all the way through the game on my third go. Did I want to play it again? Yes I did. Did I want to play it a week later? Hmm...

It's criminal when a game's major failing point is its longevity. *Virtua Cop's* size is fixed, in that it's a direct conversion of an arcade game, but there should have been some repeated play extras. The fact of the matter is that now that you can play it as much as you like for free you'll tire of it within a few days.

Sega's Saturn recently saw the release of *Virtua Cop 2*. If they'd bundled both games together for the PC version, then *Virtua Cop* would have been twice as tempting as it already is.

DANIEL GRIFFITHS



PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

Virtua Cop looks good. It plays well. It's great fun. It's just far too short lived. Damn.

80%

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Necrodome

Mindscape £40

It's a car combat game with plenty of trimmings but just as many flaws.

IT'S A REAL SHAME THAT *NECRODOME* doesn't quite pull off what it attempts, because I've long been hoping that somebody would create a car combat game for the PC that was good to play. Y'know, something based on the Mad Max films or that dinky little Steve Jackson paper game, Car Wars. Something where you got to drive cars very fast *and* shoot at things. Something with a campaign element too, where you kept improving your car and getting harder missions.

And *Necrodome* does its best, offering you giant arenas dotted around a post-apocalyptic, near-future USA, where you're strapped into a bucking hunk of metal and sent out to do battle. It has a nice, big range of guns, from lasers to high-explosives with the odd tactical nuke thrown in for good measure; it has options to let a friend 'be' your gunner while you concentrate on driving; it even gives you the chance to participate in the holiest of PC holies: network play against other humans. In short, it has everything that I wanted and hoped for in my ideal car combat game.

"It's impossible to drive in the way you'd like to."

Running around the arena without the protection of a car is a bad idea. It happens to you too, if your car blows up.

Except that it's no fun to play.

Part of the blame for this must go to whoever designed the game physics. When I'm driving along fast in a car and I hit an outcrop of rock at an angle of, say, 30 degrees or so, I don't expect to be knocked directly backwards. But that's what happens in the game and it's really annoying. It's impossible to drive in the way you'd like to. You should be able to slew your car about wildly, snapping off pot-shots at things that come into your field of fire, but because of this flaw in the game physics you spend all your time concentrating on inch-perfect steering.

The game is full of little niggles like this. Another example is that there's no graphical representation of how damaged your car is (you know how useful that little picture in *Doom* or *Quake* is?), so that your car often blows up without you realising quite how much danger you're in. (There is a little graph, but who's got time to keep checking that when you're in the middle of fatal combat?)

STEVE FARAGHER

Each arena has its own unique scenery, which lends it an atmosphere all of its own. This is good.

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

A valiant try at an under-used genre. Unfortunately the expertise of the game design doesn't match the promise of the idea.

56%

Power Chess

Sierra £40

Let's face it, the vast majority of us could pick any chess game off the shelves and it'd hand out a sound drubbing on any level higher than chimp mode. But wait, *Power Chess* is beating the hide from its drums with much big talk about adaptive engines. Although all the usual skill levels and customisable opponents are included, if you take on *Power Chess* in 'King' mode, you become embroiled in a linked-game series where, like some science fiction horror flick about rogue robots, your AI opponent remembers you and your ploys and, sinisterly, learns.

The idea is that, game by game, the engine remains one step ahead, stretching you so that you win about one game in four. After every game a blow-by-blow analysis is offered by the Queen,

the Alan Hansen of *Power Chess*, who cajoles and scolds your moves in the captivatingly measured tones of all female computers. Whether the WChess engine would fool Harrison Ford's Replicant test I can't say over the short term, but I did win one out of four games and every match felt like an even struggle. Moreover, the direct simplicity of *Power Chess* taught me more about thrusting Rook attacks and developing my horsies than any other program, with the Queen leading me by the hand through alternative scenarios to show what might have been.

Experienced players will still find that *Chessmaster Turbo 5000* with its thousands of stored games, superior graphics and more extensive advice facilities remains the superior PC chess game, but this is a worthy challenger and ideal for absolute beginners.

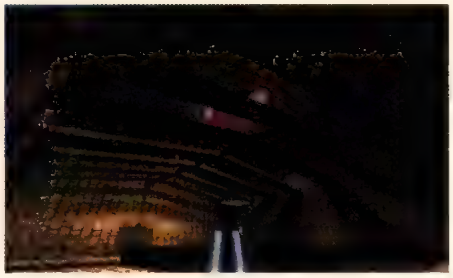
MARK DONALD

85%

Aftershock

GT £20

CD GAMER comes with free *Quake* levels every month. But now you've got the chance to pay twenty quid for some more...



THE *QUAKE* PHENOMENON WAS LESS of an avalanche, more a rolling stone slowly gathering moss. First we had the hype, then the screenshots, then the deathmatch test levels, then the first episode coverdisc demo and then we finally got the finished game. Hard men Fragmeisters forced onto us their killing zones. Computer course night students in Helsinki e-mailed us the first freeware levels. Now there's *Aftershock*, the first of an undoubtedly endless landslide of commercial quickie levels that are about the standard of the best freeware offerings, that you'll find on CD GAMER every month.

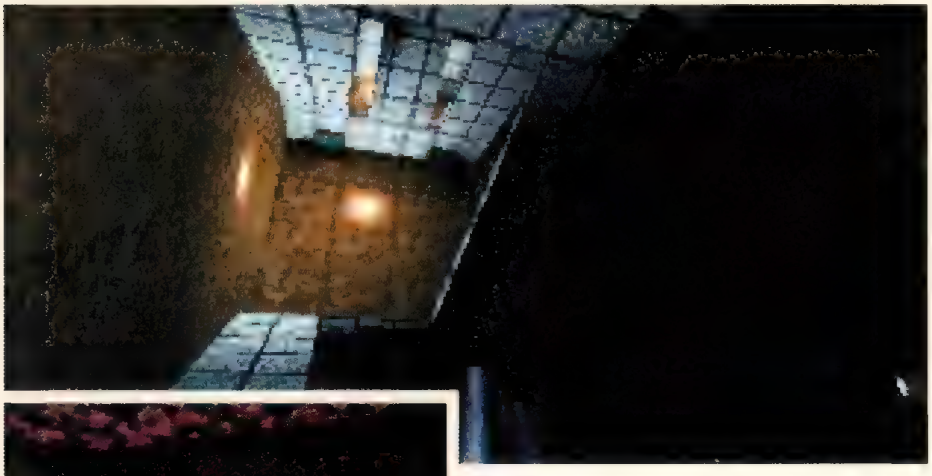
> "Aftershock's *saving grace is its attempt at a new, ongoing scenario.*"

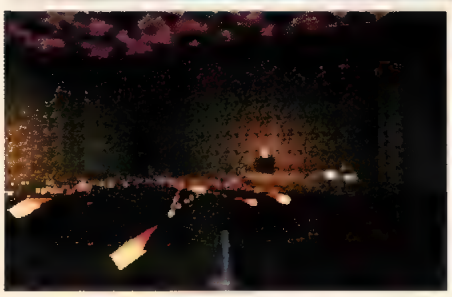
As is usual, these non Id levels are spaciously designed rather than tight and claustrophobic as we'd get from the masters. Why everyone does this isn't clear. Yes, it can be tricky to create dense, twisting corridors but elsewhere there are some lovely latticed platforms, letting you fight like bats in the cathedral vaults. *Aftershock* does at least contain many, many new textures, most of which are thankfully non brown, and these do at least initially make the levels look more interesting. There are no new monsters though – that's being saved for a second CD due for release around February next year.

Aftershock's saving grace is its attempt at a new, ongoing scenario. Freeware stand-alone missions now seem dizzyingly pointless – there's no pacing, no fighting for the nailgun and no saving your ammo for a decent start next level. While single player games were getting boring when *Quake* arrived, an ongoing campaign, if you're desperate for gibbage and you're caught without a modem, is far preferable to downloading hordes of single-shot levels.

GT are also giving you the tools to roll your own. The *Aftershock* 3D Level Editor – called Thred and available free on the Internet – is a simpler way of creating even more levels for *Quake* (which, as we've seen, the world is crying out for). It functions just like a CAD package, except that instead of bathtubs or bicycles you're designing temples of diabolical power crammed full of the mutated spawn of evil. We beg you to do something creative with it.

NATHAN JONES





Ramps are a common feature of add-on levels. Are they, by any chance, easier to implement than steps?

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

Nothing startling, just competent shareware-style *Quake* levels. Good for the Internet challenged.

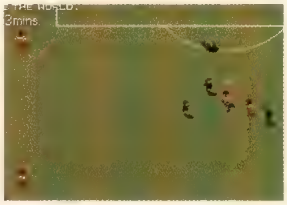
70%

SWOS 96/97

Warner £30
(Upgrade disk £10)

It was with some predictable excitement that I greeted the arrival of yet another version of the classic *Sensible Soccer*. But whereas I expected to mark it that little bit lower this time round, not least because it has lost its hair, and its ears and nose have grown disproportionately large, I feel that in some modern game backlash I might have to mark it a little bit higher.

You see, *SWOS* makes no sense at all. It goes thoroughly against the grain of modern PC gaming. It looks and sounds out of date, but the fun you can have playing this gloriously simple arcade game is, oh it hurts me to come out with such corn, timeless. It still has its single-player problems. The computer is shockingly and heart sinkingly good, not least because it is notoriously difficult to score. If you play a friendly, this need not be such an issue as you can just up the game length. But competition matches are foolishly fixed at five minutes (that's just two and a half minutes each way maths fans), which is rarely enough time to beat the keeper. The management side of things is still an afterthought, relying on transfers and tactical decisions to fool you into thinking you have total control.



But where it really works is as a two-player game. This is two-player in the retro sense. Two people sitting next to each. Shouting. Screaming. Annoying everyone else in the office. I played against Jon Smith at lunchtime. He'd never played before, but within two minutes he was screaming at the referee. Twenty minutes later he left with his first victory under his belt, hailing *SWOS* to be one of the finest games in existence. He, is of course, right. Bear in mind, though, that only team updates separate this game from its previous existence, which makes the £10 upgrade a bit steep. Also available on floppy disk.

STEVE OWEN

87%

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US Navy Fighters 97

Electronic Arts £45

Two years after the release of the original, *US Navy Fighters* is back, but has it stood the test of time?

MY FIRST IMPRESSION ON running *USNF97* (try saying that while you're eating breakfast) was that it was exactly the same as the original *USNF* that scored 86% in PCG 13. And it is. Except for a couple of minor differences:

For a start, there are three available campaign settings: The Ukraine (from the original *USNF*), the Kuril Islands (from the later Marine Fighters expansion disk) and an all-new set based in Vietnam. There's also the most extraordinary choice of aircraft available (in the appropriate campaign settings, of course), including Harrier Jump-Jets, Hornets, Tomcats, Flankers, MiGs and even a Yak Freestyle (me neither). Five of these are new.

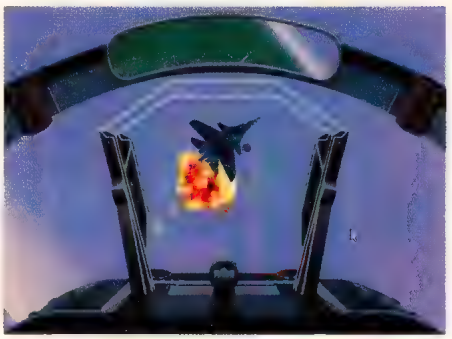
"The chance to attempt the same mission in different planes."

And there's a mission creator, which lets you, erm, design your own missions.

And there's a couple of extra options, like being able to turn off the automatic targeting (more realistic, apparently), or have more options in the cheat mode about how invulnerable to damage your plane is (less realistic, obviously).

So where does this leave *USNF97*? Well, in pretty good shape. The game plays just as well as Chris Buxton described it in his original review. The handling of the planes is all very smooth and realistic, the graphics come in a range of complexities depending on your processor power, and are very beautiful indeed at the top end (although you really need something faster than a P100 to get the best out of them). The missions are the usual fare, pretty well-balanced in terms of difficulty, and it's nice to have the three campaign options to choose from, letting you get about a bit.

The US Navy formation flying team can't hold a candle to our own, trusty Red Arrows. Bless 'em.



Check out the rear-view mirror. In those golden days, flying was so much more exciting, don't you think?

Of course, *USNF* is now a couple of years old, which is a lifetime in politics and computer game development. So, don't go expecting something that's quite the quality of *Jetfighter 3* (PCG 38, 81%) or *F-22 Lightning 2* (PCG 37, 82%). Things have noticeably moved on, especially in the display of terrain, which looks a little dull and lifeless in *USNF97*, even at the top resolutions, because it doesn't appear to use any sort of clever fractal terrain generator like the two newer games.

But to balance out that lack of graphical finesse, *USNF97* does offer you a lot more playing time for your money, not just because of the three campaigns, but also because of the chance to attempt the same mission in different planes, to see how they stack up against each other.

Of course, if you've got the original version, it's going to be very difficult to persuade yourself that it's worth spending the money again just to have an extra campaign. Perhaps EA will do the decent thing and put out the Vietnam campaign as a data disk. Don't hold your breath though.

STEVE FARAGHER

PC GAMER – THE VERDICT

It's beginning to show its age now, but *US Navy Fighters* is still a fine and complex flight sim.

79%

Ashes To Ashes

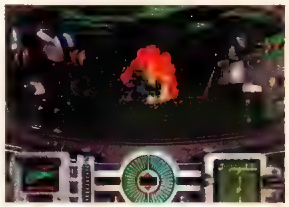
Corel £47

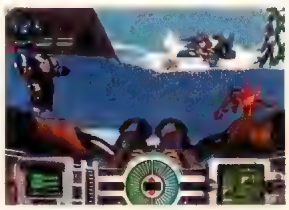
Funk to funky. We know Major Tom's a junky. They don't write lyrics like that anymore. And what Corel don't seem to realise is that apart from their good selves, no-one's making games like this any more. Except, perhaps, some bedroom shareware types. But definitely no-one that really wants to be taken seriously as a games publisher.

Ashes To Ashes has been made anyway. It's not atrocious, and is even quite a bit of fun. But whereas other people seem content to liberally throw marks in the 70s or 80s around as if it was a sign that a game is mediocre rather than good, *Ashes To Ashes* demands something lower.

For starters, £47 is rather a lot of money for something that, had it appeared in the They're Back section at the pocket-friendlier sum of £13, would have been greeted heartily with a mince pie and a glass of mulled wine. As it is, asking £47 for something that would have been proud two years ago is, frankly, sad.

There's nothing new in this *Blam! Machinehead*-style outdoor 3D landscape, except that the SVGA mode runs surprisingly quickly - even under Windows 95 (which is required, incidentally). SVGA is a little unnecessary, though, as the sprite characters are badly drawn and flat.





Musically, I've never been so puzzled as the occasion when I found myself shooting mutant humanoids in order to capture evil brains to a cheery circus tune a bit like something the Lightning Seeds might write. Vaguely entertaining, but so out of date that it reminds you of when David Bowie was actually good.

STEVE OWEN

46%

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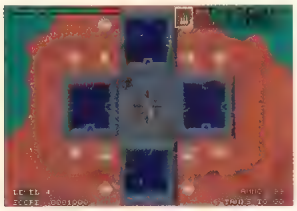
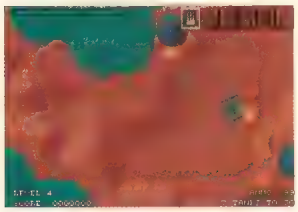
Holoid

ESN £15

Perhaps there have been worse games than the deplorable *Holoid*, but as I am sure will be the case this time, such memories are erased from my mind during painful slumbers plagued by nightmares. This game could conceivably have been written using Captain Gamemaker, the Devil's sperm itself and Mark's 'chosen' utility for our Do It Yourself feature in issue 34.





I suppose I'd better relive the trauma, then, and tell you something about this. You're in a helicopter, okay. And because helicopters are the finest vehicles known to humanity, *Holoid* is instantly awarded 10%. As the instructions so succinctly put it, your "mission is to complete your objectives". Aha, it all falls into place now. Said objectives involve shooting all the tanks on a level, shooting all the buildings on a level, or all the planes, or everything, or collecting diamonds, or finding the exit. As you can imagine with this varied mission structure, each level is utterly unique.

It's nice to know that your chopper has a built-in navigational system that stops you flying out of the area of interest, i.e. the screen stops scrolling and you fly to the edge when the level design runs out. Everything you blast takes about 50 shots of the basic weapon, which is very boring. Everything looks so naff that you would think twice about releasing this on the Commodore 64 ten years ago. Oh, it's awful.

The *Holoid* CD is now being used to stop my hot cup of coffee damaging the desk. The floppy disk that held the shareware version has been stripped into scrap components. As for the 'developers' at ESN... well, we won't be phoning them.

STEVE OWEN **10%**

Cyber Gladiators

Sierra £40

In theory, beat-'em-ups are easy. Thing 'a' stands stage left, thing 'b' stage right. A whistle is blown. Things 'a' and 'b' try to knock each other to pieces. It's a simple concept but one which people get very excited about.

Cyber Gladiators seems to have all the right elements in all the right places. Eight mean-looking 'cyber' competitors, a couple of bosses, a highly incidental story line and the requisite number of texture mapped polygons. The control set is a traditional one with two kick and two punch buttons. Combinations can be built up in the mould of *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter* with combined direction and attack commands

There are some nice touches as well. Competitors taunt each other while the *Mortal Kombat*-ish 'Ready. Fight!' bout-starter flashes on-screen, and the victory displays are also adequately slick. On certain stages, objects are thrown into the fighting arena. These can damage the fighters if they're unlucky enough to be hit by them and the javelins can actually be picked up and thrown for some serious damage. It's a nice touch, even if it's one bound to upset the purists.

Unfortunately, as a complete package, *Cyber Gladiators* is unconvincing. The *Rise Of The Robots* fiasco should have shown everyone that robots do not make good beat-'em-up material. They're just too anonymous. And yes, fighting games are simple but so's dancing, and while *Mortal Kombat 3* and *Virtua Fighter* are John Travolta in Saturday Night Fever, *Cyber Gladiators* is your dad dancing to Firestarter at a family wedding. "Hmm, this one's got a good beat to it."

It's hard to say exactly why *Cyber Gladiators* doesn't quite connect, somehow the beat-'em-up feel just isn't there. "Only buy your fighting games from reputable sources" – EU Videogames Directive, No. 23847. And who are we to argue?

JAMES ASHTON **67%**

Necromantics

Effigy £30

Described in the accompanying press release as "a fun puzzle game great for all family play" (sic), *Necromantics* is one of the crudest attempts I've ever seen to cash in on the Christmas software rush.

This is a platform game of a standard that would make a C64 owner blush with embarrassment. To cover this up the game is apparently being aimed at children, an idea presumably based on the false notion that children are not discerning in their appreciation of entertainment. While children may not be ready to enjoy great literature or music until they have properly developed a taste for it, they will still find this game with its inept collision detection, farcical monsters and 'leaps of faith' so annoying that anybody unwittingly stupid enough to have placed this pile of cack under the Christmas tree will deserve to suffer the temper tantrums of their nearest and dearest all Christmas day long.

Even worse, the 'puzzles' consist of the drearily familiar there's-nothing-else-left-to-do-on-this-level-so-pushing-that-lever-must-open-the-door kind where the solution has no logical relation to the problem. And to cap it all, in an effort to save what must be one of the worst pieces of software violence to be inflicted on the

general populace, the difficulty option lets you choose between starting with 10 lives (hard) or 40 (easy): multiple lives being the only way you will progress in this turgid, arbitrary and ultimately meaningless game.

Leave it out, Santa. And next time get your pixies to design a game that's challenging as well as fun to play, or we won't be visiting your fairy grotto again.

STEVE FARAGHER **9%**

HOW THE SCORES WORK

We think carefully about the marks we award to games. If a game really isn't up there with the best, we aren't afraid to give it an appropriately low score. And when we award 80s and 90s, it's because the games genuinely deserve it – not because we've netted an 'exclusive', or because we've got a mate who works for the software company, or to win favour with 'the industry'.

Here's how it works.

90%+
An absolute classic, a game that will be talked about for years to come. Each month there'll probably be one or two of these at the most.

85%-89%
A superb game which can proudly bear the 'Game of Distinction' logo in shops across the nation.

70%-85%
A good, enjoyable, value-for-money game. Four stars, if you like.

50%-69%
Nothing special. But if you were sitting alone at home, and there was nothing on telly, playing this game would be better than nothing.

30%-49%
Oh dear. Either through a lack of inspiration, a fatal oversight, or general crapness, this is a game that ought to be steered clear of.

0%-29%
A crime.

PCG REVIEWERS

Steve Owen hands his work in on time and goes off to the pub.

Mark Donald hands his work in promptly and is then given more.

James Flynn is the editor.

Jonathan Davies was the editor.

Steve Faragher is huge in a good way.

James Ashton is damned reliable. We like him very much.

Dean Evans watches films all day, but hasn't put on any weight.

John Houlihan knows about ants.

David Woods comes from Bristol, but knows about games anyway.

Danny Wallace is one craaazy guy.

Nathan Jones is surprisingly not Welsh.

Daniel Griffiths knows more about ants than John Houlihan.

Ed Ricketts is a man we're very pleased to have around.

They're back

It's a funny old game, but no matter how good it is, life is limited at 40 quid. Hark the rebirth of yesteryear's classics for a cheaper amount of dosh. It's another load of re-issues. By STEVE OWEN

1 MICRO MACHINES 2 SPECIAL EDITION

Codemasters Hot Stuff £13

This classic top-down mini racer is no less playable one more year on. You'll need at least one friend to really enjoy yourself, and if you can get four people around your PC, this is 486 fun personified. **92%**

2 PSYCHO PINBALL

Codemasters Hot Stuff £13

Okay, so playing pinball on your PC is starting to pale a little, but this is still a firm favourite in our office. Slick, fast and with four tables, it's a lot better value than shelling out for a full price pinball game. **84%**

3 LINKS COURSES 1, 2, 3

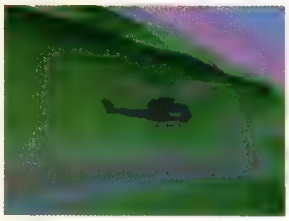
Kixx £13 each

A total of six new courses, five of which are great, but Devil's Island is frustratingly hard. Or perhaps a challenge? As well as working with the *Links* and *Microsoft Golfs* of old, these unlock the new versions on the *Links LS* CD. **82%**

4 WEREWOLF

Novalogic Masters £13

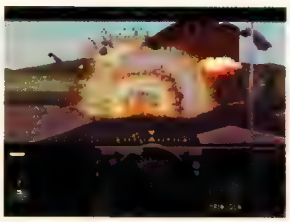
Half of the follow-up to *Comanche*, *Werewolf* is the Russian helicopter equivalent. Fast and reasonably detailed graphics surround an almost arcade-style flight sim. Simple and quite satisfying, but there's no multi-player option. **80%**



5 SHELLSHOCK

Kixx £13

It's only just come out anyway, and this January it's even cheaper. *Shellshock* is a disappointing *Doom* in tanks, with some great ideas, but other bits that just don't work. And annoying full-motion video characters. **75%**



6 CHAMP MAN 2

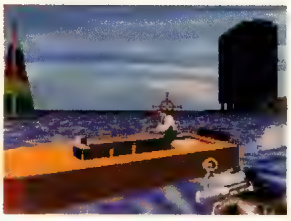
Kixx £13

Eidos keep calling us to moan about it, but we've never rated *Championship Manager 2* as the finest football management game, even if it does sell exceptionally well. A cheap way to see if the genre appeals, mind. **60%**

7 TEKWAR

Kixx £13

As a *Doom* beater this is about as convincing as Mr Shatner's head rug. Sciencey backgrounds and a famous name don't distract from a stupidly slow and irritatingly unplayable game. Only for fans of the novel. **56%**



8 ARMORED FIST

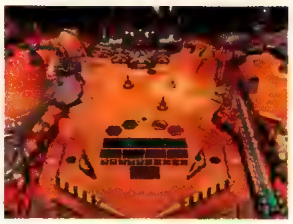
Novalogic Masters £13

Novalogic's cross between a serious tank simulator and a modern-day Battle Zone never works quite as successfully as its airborne brothers. The graphical landscapes look very flawed when you're at ground level. **48%**

9 ULTRA PINBALL

Sierra Originals £10

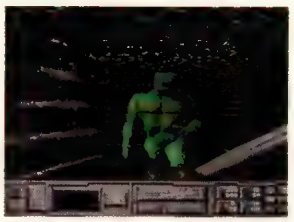
You'll need to wait until February for this original, but considering that we awarded the sequel a paltry 22% last month, the benefit of such a wait is questionable. Somewhat unplayable, which is never a good sign. **36%**



10 FORTRESS OF DR RADIAKI

Hit Squad £13

Another one of those games that appeared right after *Doom* hit the scene and thought it deserved a look, but actually failed to be anywhere near as good. Looks even worse next to *Quake*. **31%**



And the rest...

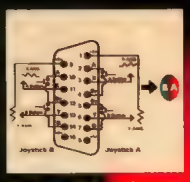
Gunship — **Regenerator £5**
Reasonable, but exceedingly old flight sim. **31%**

ATAC — **Regenerator £5**
Less reasonable, but exceedingly old flight sim too. **28%**

AAWITS — **Regenerator £5**
Least reasonable and almost dead flight sim. **24%**

Alfa Twin

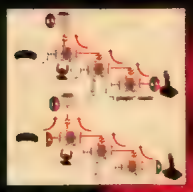
The ONLY automatic joystick selector you'll ever need



Although most PCs have only one game port the design actually supports two joysticks (A & B). Advanced sticks that sport four buttons, throttle and rudder controls or mode keys, make use of the second joystick (B) controls. When two sticks are connected only two fire buttons per stick are available.

In two player mode, both joysticks can be activated at the same time for two player games. However, due to the design of the IBM joystick port, the advanced functions of the joysticks are not supported.

Select single player mode and the AlfaTwin allows you to switch between two joysticks. In this mode, all the functions of the stick are supported. To select your stick, simply press the fire button of the controller you wish to use.



You can cascade up to three AlfaTwins together. This allows four different joysticks to be connected simultaneously. Moreover, the six foot long cable brings the AlfaTwin round to the front of your desk, freeing you from the hassle of plugging/unplugging your joystick from the back of the computer.

Authorised Dealers

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Tel: 01703 334094

To be included in this list telephone 0181 900 9291

Leading joystick manufacturer says:

"Just to let you know that the AlfaTwin Joystick-switch arrived intact. At this moment I have connected 7 (!) joysticks to the AlfaTwin :-) and it works perfectly.

Computer - - - AlfaTwin
- Gravis Phoenix
- Gravis GrIP
- Gravis GamePads

"This all works without having to pull out all the cables, einfach wunderbar! I cannot say anything else except congratulations with a very nice product."

Edu Oskam ,Technical Support Specialist
(Gravis Europe /Holland)

International Press comment on AlfaTwin:

England

PC Format
"This is an auto switch and two player adapter for any two 15 pin controllers. In auto-switch mode all the advanced controlls, such as hats are available. It costs less than 20 pounds."
(Gold-award September 1996)

CD ROM Today
"There is no need to install drivers or fiddle around inside your machine... it [illegible] AlfaTwin does its job and adds a whole new dimension to gaming. Very useful.."
(Best Buy June 1995)

PC Review
As well as helping you enjoy unbridled two player action you can plug in two different styles of joystick and cunningly flip between them."
(September 1996)

Germany

PC-Player
"One of the most annoying problems of the PCs is finally solved... the 40 Mark device fulfills so many functions, that you cannot live without it after only a few minutes of use."
(July 1996)

PC Action
"An intelligent joystick adapter for two players... outstanding useability, a very good price performance ratio"
(August 1996)

PC-Speil
"The new magic word for two-player games is Alfa twin"
(June 1996)

Japan

DOS/V
"For the PC, to become a popular game hardware... it is also indespensable to be played with two players. It is no fun to play with pad vs keyboard. Now we can use AlfaTwin."
(March 1996)

Other Alfa Data Products

AlfaCrystal

AlfaPilot-Plus

AlfaCommander-Pro

AlfaDread

ALFA DATA

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Golden Image (UK) Ltd.
65 Hallmark Trading Estate, Fourth Way,
Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 0LB Tel: 0181 900 9291 Fax 0181 900 9281

AlfaData Head Office
3F No.8, Lane 263, Chung Yang Rd, Nankang, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.
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Innova Products Ltd.
Unit 1, Lismirrane Industrial Estate, Elstree Road, Hertfordshire, WD6 3EE
Tel: 0181 207 2222 Fax: 0181 953 2121

HTTP://www.reserve.co.uk/gold

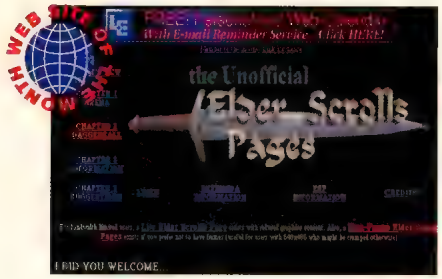
Netware

Make the most of your Internet connection with our monthly guide to the best Web sites currently available.

By STEVE FARAGHER

THE UNOFFICIAL ELDER SCROLLS WEB SITE

http://www.newforce.ca/~jackel/esp/



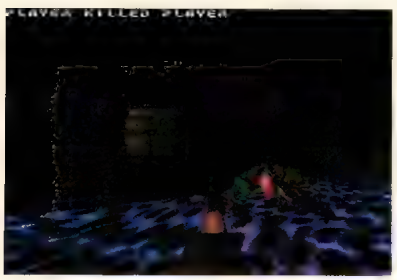
For those of you who are totally sad gits, and have nothing better to do with your time than devote hundreds of hours to playing *Daggerfall* (I should know...), there's a site that offers the most fantastic collection of hints, tips, cheats and information for your favourite game. This site is immense and comprehensive, offering everything from detailed walk-throughs of most of the missions to a comprehensive list of all the shops, in all the cities, in all the countries that make up this sprawling, wonderful game. Look no further for *Daggerfall* help.

GRAUNIAD

National newspaper, The Guardian, runs a small column every Saturday called "Glossary for the 90s", which explains the meaning of newly coined words. The November 30th column had the following definition: "**Disk-dancer** *n. comp.* Someone who signs up to online services using free-offer disks and bogus credit card numbers. When found out, they move to another free account." Well, I never... the cheeky devils, eh?

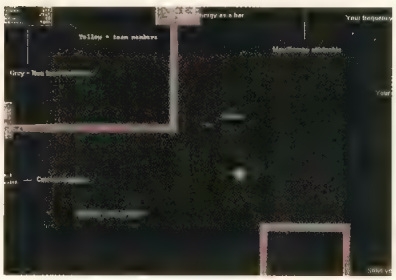
QUAKE CONNECTION PROBLEMS

I've had a few e-mails recently from people who are having all sorts of problems getting connected to *Quake* servers. Once we get a few more in, so that we can see what the most common problems are, we'll run a trouble-shooting guide – probably sometime early in the new year. So send in all your problems, with as much detail as possible to help us pinpoint the causes, either to me at my e-mail address (sfaragher@futurenet.co.uk), or via snail mail to the usual PC GAMER address. Please be sure to mark your e-mails or envelopes: *Quake* Problems, Netware.



SUBSPACE

http://www.vie.com/



Those of you who enjoy being at the forefront of new technology (which I'm assuming is all of you), will be interested to hear about the free online gaming that's going on at the Virgin Interactive site (http://www.vie.com/). There's currently only one game on offer, a rather dinky space combat game called *Subspace* (further details of which are available in our May '96 issue). Getting involved couldn't be simpler, just download the game from the Web site, install it, set it running and – hey presto! – you're away. Hopefully.

FREE NET ADDRESS

http://netaddress.usa.net

Fancy a free e-mail address? Just get yourself over to this site and fill in the subscription form. The catch? Well, it would seem to be that they're paying for your time by providing advertising space. Whether this means that your free e-mail address will be bombarded by those annoying 'press releases' that are increasingly the bane of the Internet remains to be seen. Still, you can always stop using it... Rather more tidily, there's a free forwarding service too, which means that you can send any e-mail sent to this address on to your current address. Get a new e-mail address and you simply point your usa.net address at your new one, meaning you need never change it.

DOWNLOAD

http://www.download.com

Simon Williams, he of the 'Systems' pages later in the magazine, has a recommendation for you. Simon writes: "There are plenty of good sites for gamers on the Internet, but one of the most professional, and best stocked, is download.com, which is part of the C/Net

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THE SOFTIES ON THE NET GUIDE - PART 3

And now the end is more than near, it's here. This is the final part of our A-Z of software houses on the Internet.

Strategic Simulations Inc (SSI)

http://www.ssionline.com

Some of the best hints and tips pages I've ever seen are available here, for all of SSI's games. And given the fact that they tend to produce sophisticated, complex games, this is very welcome too. Aside from that, this is a very competent site with everything you could want from demos to backstage info. A must.

Content ★★★★
Downloads ★★★★
Hints & Tips ★★★★★

Team 17

http://www..team17.com

The site for all you *Worms* freaks out there (I can see you hiding behind your big brother, come out now). Team 17's support for this game is a fine example of how these things should be done. Add in their competition to win loads of music CDs and their full support for all their other games and you've got a spot well worth the visit.

Content ★★★★
Downloads ★★★
Hints & Tips ★★★★

Ubi Soft

http://www.ubisoft.com

A truly international site (available in five languages) that is really only of interest to players of *Rayman* (for the tips), or anyone who wants to download a demo of it.

Content ★★
Downloads ★
Hints & Tips ★★

Virgin

http://www.vie.com

Another smashing site that's designed with the equality and care we've come to expect from Virgin. Shame about the 'hip 'n' happening' language though. All the information and downloads you'd hope for are here.

Content ★★★★
Downloads ★★★★
Hints & Tips ★★★★

Westwood Studios

http://www.westwood.com

Well, what did you expect? Yes, it's brilliant. Demos of all Westwood's games are just the starting point for this fabulous site that also features hints and tips, behind-the-scenes information and such a wealth of detail (movies, screenshots and guides to every game) that even the most obsessive fan of *C&C* will find something useful here. Even if it's only the great piece of free software that lets you verbally taunt your opponents, wherever they are in the world.

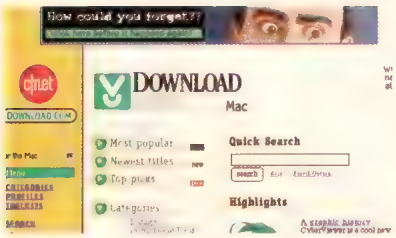
Content ★★★★
Downloads ★★★★★
Hints & Tips ★★★★

Williams

http://www.williamsentertainment.com

Williams' site looked fine when we finally made it past the intro page. A minimal but well presented selection of their growing range of PC titles.

Content ★★★
Downloads ★
Hints & Tips ★★



service. You can pick from hundreds of demos and full shareware titles, neatly categorised by game type, such as Action, Arcade, RPG and Simulations. Cunningly, download.com holds few of the programs itself, but instead directs you to a 'mirror' site in your own country. This is usually a lot quicker than downloading from the US.

"It's good to have this kind of immediate access to the latest demos, but you have to bear in mind the size of the demos and the speed at which you can download them from the Web. Even with the fastest modems currently available, 33.6Kbps, it's going to take you hours to download some of these demos, which can be over 10Mb each. Cheaper to get them from CD GAMER (couldn't resist that).

"Download.com is only part of a much larger site which offers computer news, and all kinds of shareware for downloading. It's interesting to note that in the list the site maintains of its most popular accesses of all types of software, six of the top ten titles are games. The most popular title, by the way, is a lame screensaver skit on the Macarena single, called Hey Macaroni!"

Thanks Simon, I've taken a look myself and he's quite right, it's very good.

COPYRIGHT ON THE INTERNET

http://www.wipo.com

One of the major new developments on the Internet is the move to introduce copyright protection to anybody who puts work on the Net. At the moment it's practically impossible to protect anything you put up on the Net, which a lot of people say is why there's very little of any real value out there.

The World Intellectual Property Organisation is a UN body that deals with the protection of copyright and is now trying to extend its considerable influence Webwards.

All well and good, but they're going to have to do something about the speed of their Web site if they want people to take them seriously. As you can see from the picture below, I've got over 20,000 hours to wait to get on. A bit too long, if you ask me. PCG

E-MAIL US

If you've come across any useful or interesting stuff on the Internet which we could include on this page, please e-mail it to one of us:

Steve Faragher – sfaragher@futurenet.co.uk
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Finished *Command & Conquer?* Then you'll be needing the much-harder *Covert Ops* to plug into it. Then you'll see. **93%**

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TERRA NOVA

More people ought to play this excellent game of robot warfare, with its smashing graphics and clever missions. **91%**

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Although you'll need a PC of SkyNet proportions to see it at its best, this is one of the PC's lovliest flight sims. **93%**

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TERMINATOR: FUTURE SHOCK

There's little in the world of PC gaming more scary than the bit in *Future Shock* where you creeping around a hotel. **92%**

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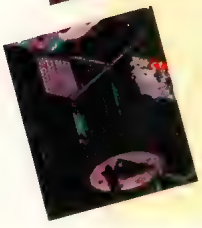


CRUSADER: NO REGRET

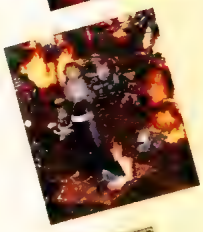
A tremendous game, this, where you're an agent infiltrating an enemy complex. The deaths are gory; the explosions, huge. **85%**

RRP £39.99

RELOADED

This one's so new we haven't even played it yet. It appears, though, to be *Gauntlet* – but in 3D. Could be worth a try.

RRP N/A



GENE WARS

Bullfrog certainly know a thing or two about strategy games, as *Gene Wars* makes clear. You engineer organisms in it. **84%**

RRP £39.99

SPACE HULK 2

A terrifying blend of shooting and strategy, with aliens jumping out at your heroic space marines all over the place. **86%**

RRP £44.99

FRAGILE ALLEGIANCE

This one really is great. It's an incredibly involvèd, and incredibly absorbing, space strategy game. **91%**

RRP £39.99

REALMS OF THE HAUNTING

Again, even we haven't played this yet. It looks brilliant, though – a 3D adventure game with smashing graphics.

RRP N/A

SAND WARRIORS

Or this one. But it, too, looks jolly good – a 3D shoot-'em-up set in ancient Egypt, or something. It's in Eyewitness.

RRP N/A

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Toonstruck

Complete Solution

Escape dingy dungeons, flush fish down toilets and watch a cow being whipped by a sheep. All you need is the PC GAMER Rough Guide to *Toonstruck* and about 40 spare hours... By DEAN EVANS

A GENTLE START

After the scene-setting intro sequence, walk down the grand staircase and wander into the room on the right where you'll find the royal scientist, Bricabrac. Talk to him to discover that he's lost his glasses and, as he's as useless as a lace bucket without them, nip back out again, run up the stairs and go into the trophy room. Here you'll find the king's footman, and a brief chat will reveal that Bricabrac always loses his glasses in his coat pocket. Armed with this information, return to the lab and talk to Bricabrac again. He'll now

find his glasses and explain the 'tippety-top' secret mission that you've agreed to undertake. Grab the bottomless bag and the blueprint and then leave the palace.

Outside, speak to the guards and watch the key that one drops when they perform their dance. Speak to the guards again and as soon as the mouse cursor appears, click on the key to pick it up. Head back into the palace and unlock the door on the left with the guard's key. The door will open to reveal King Hugh's bedroom. Get the music box from the chest of drawers and use Flux to search the bed. Get the voucher that he finds and then roll back the rug on the floor. Read the note stuck to the mirror and solve the draw puzzle to open a secret passageway (this will be revealed when both the top draw and the bottom draw are open and the others are closed.)

MY LORD, I HAVE A CUNNING PLAN...

It's not important yet, but you need to get your hands on the fish and the gold-plated watering can in the trophy room. It's time to get shot of the footman. Making sure the rug is rolled back, enter the secret passageway and use Flux on the loose floorboard. Next, click on the floorboard with the cursor. This catapults Flux up to the trapdoor so he can unlock it. Return to the bedroom and click on the rolled-up carpet to replace it over the trapdoor. Pull the large cord next to the bed to summon the footman. After the footman has been disposed of, return to the trophy room and get the red fish that hangs on the wall. Forget about the watering can for now.

Next, leave the palace and head for the town centre (notice the round indentation in the ground - it becomes important later). Walk into the tavern (the one with the beer sign), watch the mouse annoying the customers and then talk to the barman. If the mouse isn't already standing next to the mousetrap, manoeuvre it cunningly towards the trap by trying to pick it up. When it's in position, use the organ and, while the mouse is dancing, use Flux on the mousetrap to stun the bothersome rodent. Get the battered tankard from the barman, pick up the mouse and then skip merrily back to the trophy room. Picking up the watering can causes the door to close, trapping you inside. But to escape, simply plonk the tankard on the pedestal. It's the same weight as the watering can and so the door will open. Return to the town.

OOH, SUITS YOU SIR.

Now enter the arcade at the bottom right of the screen. Speaking to the cashier will reveal that you can play two games; Wacman and the Strength-O-Meter. If you can beat the cashier at Wacman he'll give you a 'practically gold chain'. Unfortunately, you won't be able to win the Strength-O-Meter game just yet. Especially not with the rubber hammer that the cashier insists you use. So forget about the 'fine wine' prize for the moment, leave the arcade and pop into Miss Fit's Costumerama. Talk to miss Fit to reveal her passion for books.

As there's nothing you can do here yet either, leave the Costumerama and head for the bakery. A quick chat with the bakers will reveal that they can't make any dough. Examine the piano and grab the two loose piano keys that fall off when its ivories are tinkled. Leave the bakers and head south towards the meadow. Talk to Fluffy to discover (a) her hatred for cotton candy (candyfloss to you and me) and (b) her love of popcorn. Again, all you can really do now is move on. At the farm, chat to the Carecrow and take a corncob from the field. Go to the barn on the hill

MY, WHAT BIG TEETH YOU HAVE

In the barn, speak to Marge the cow about the Churnatron. Not even Flux can find the missing part of the machine in the haystack, so console yourself by filling the watering can

with fertiliser and then return to the Carecrow field. Heading west again, you'll come across an angry squirrel, a tree and a pile of nuts. There's also a red pepper hidden in a briar patch but this, like many of the objects you've seen so far, is unobtainable at the moment. So, continue west until you encounter B.B. Wolf. He's looking for a bottle of wine. If you haven't got one (and you haven't) you can't get past into the Malevolands.

The only option left is the path to the north which leads to the Zanydu Shuttle. To make the contraption work, you must first use the stunned mouse on the empty yellow hand (that's the one on the right). Next use the watering can filled with fertiliser on the mouse to wake it up, then hop into the shuttle and push the lever forwards. Next stop Zanydu Central.

IS FISH-FLUSHING LEGAL?

At Zanydu (notice another circular indentation in the ground here), start by taking the path to your left. This leads to Jim's Gym and Zanydu Fish-Flushing Facility. The guard bars the way into the outhouse, but by speaking to him you can discover what time his shift ends (6 o'clock) and that he won't leave until the Zanydu clock strikes the hour. Unfortunately, the guard times his shift by the Zanydu clock, which is broken. Look at the flyer outside the gym that advertises the phone-in quiz. Remember the sequence of colours (blue, purple, red, orange, yellow, green, orange) for later use.

Go into Jim's Gym. Look at the Pump-O-Tron and then talk to Jim about his athletic prowess. Watch Jim's impressive tumbling routine and then return to the Zanydu crossroads. The middle path leads to the Way-Outback, where you'll find a vulture perched on an arrow sign. As for the right-hand path, this leads to the WACME building and the Zanydu clock. Enter WACME by going through a door with a light above it and talk to Woof. When he demonstrates the contents of the show cabinet, collect the floating stars and ask about the Gift-O-Matic machine. Look at the portraits on the wall and note down the phone number on the security guards ID badge (purple, yellow, yellow, blue, green, red, orange).

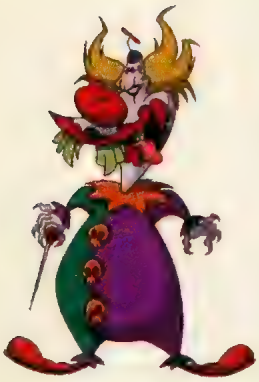
IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Return to the tavern in Cutopia and use the phone on the bar. Phone the outhouse guard (using the colour-coded number above) and listen to his answerphone message. Next, phone the Zanydu quiz line. You must answer six questions correctly to win a can of WACME jumping beans. The answers to the questions are listed below:

- The fish on the top of the outhouse are YELLOW
- The fish on the guard's right shoulder is RED
- The fish on the guard's left shoulder is YELLOW
- The arrow pointing to the gym is BLUE
- Woof's dog collar is GREEN
- Woof's fur is white and PURPLE
- The floor tiles inside the gym are BLUE
- The rocky mountains of Way-Outback are ORANGE
- The plant pots outside WACME are PURPLE
- Jim's fur is BLUE
- The arrow pointing to WACME is RED

If you get all six questions correct, leave the tavern, pick up the package and then make your way back to WACME.

WACMEP I'LL SMACK YOUR FACE IN!



At WACME, use the jumping beans on Woof to prove you are a paying customer. Activate the Gift-O-Matic machine to get your hands on the magnet, the rubber glove and the mallet. Next, head for the barn. Use the magnet on the haystack to find the missing piece of the Churnatron, use the part on the machine and then take the two sticks of butter that are produced once Marge is plugged in. Now return to Jim's Gym. Use one stick of butter on the vaulting horse and then speak to Jim again to get him to perform his tumbling routine. When he slips and ends up in the far wall, use the Pump-O-Tron to become stronger.

Return to the arcade and use the new mallet on the Strength-O-Meter. When it breaks, pick up the bells and get the wine that the cashier gives you as a reward. In the meantime, Nefarious has zapped the barn and Marge is strapped to the Wheel O' Love enjoying a good whipping from Punisher Polly. Fill the watering can with the gunk (weed killer) and then walk towards the squirrel's tree. Use the weed killer on the briar patch to get the red pepper and then hand over the wine to the wolf. When you're captured, click on the left and right edges of the cooking pot to rock it and tip it over. Use the corncob on the fire to make some popcorn, get the roasting spit and grab "The Mating Habits Of The Malevolent Squirrel" that lies on the bookcase.

THE NOT-SO-FABULOUS BAKER BOYS

Head back towards the palace, stopping to give the popcorn to Fluffy — she'll give you her cotton candy in return — and to refill the watering can with weed killer in the barn. When you reach the palace, use the spit on the locked cabinet (specifically the hole on the side) and get the stuffed cat that you find in there.

Your next stop is the bakery (if the dreaded Pencil Test Patrol appear, hide in the pantry to escape them*). Give the second butter stick to the bakers and they will make some dough. Take the dough with you to the wolves den and, using the spit, cook it over the fire. Take the roll from the spit and put both in your bottomless bag. With B.B. out of the way, you can now enter the Malevolands (again, notice the circular depression in the street). Talk to Slab the bouncer about the dress code for Seedy's Bowling Club. Pick up a lump of meat from the street and then head towards the Zanydu Shuttle.

* If you are captured by the PTP at any point, you'll get thrown into prison. To escape, walk around the cell to charge yourself up with static electricity. Touch the Years-Left-O-Meter to decrease the length of the sentence. Repeat this process until the time remaining is zero, whereupon the cell door automatically opens. To retrieve your belongings, examine the picture on the wall and then complete the sliding block puzzle to open the safe.

LOVE IS BLIND

Use the weed killer with the lump of meat, take the middle path towards the Way-Outback and give the poisoned drumstick to the vulture. When it dies, get the arrow sign that it was perched on and pluck a feather from its body. Head back to the shuttle and then to the barn. Give the feather to the animal S&M fans and take the tube of glue that they offer you.

You should now have all the items to

make a convincing squirrel decoy. Use the glue on the cotton candy and then use the cotton candy on the cat. Dab some glue on the two piano keys and attach them to the stuffed feline too. Lastly, use the jumping beans with the cat to give it a bit of life. When the decoy is complete, use it with the squirrel's doorstep and then send Flux up into the tree to get the nuts. Go to the Malevolands.

HARLEQUINS? I'M A BATH MAN MYSELF

Enter the PTP prison office, examine the picture on the wall and complete the sliding ☛

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block puzzle to open the safe. Take the cartoon hole from the safe and the inkpad from the desk. Leave the prison office and use the hole with the circular dent on the ground to travel to the nexus. Transport to the Cutopian town centre, use the inkpad on the music box to create a stamp and then use the music box on the costume voucher to validate it. Nip quickly into Miss Fit's (hide in the changing room if the PTP show up) and give her the voucher. Take the free fly suit and then choose the Harlequin costume from the catalogue. Give the costume to the Carecrow in the field and he will give you his cloak.

Return to Seedy's Bowling Alley and use the cloak to get past the bouncer. Talk to Seedy (if the PTP arrive try to hide in the room on the right) to learn the rules of hare-pin bowling. To get a lane, use the glue in the bear's ball when it arrives back at the top of the lane. To get a strike and win the golden pins, use Flux with the lane. After this, cross the road and visit the robot maker. Talk to him and note the plunger on his counter.

THE CURTAIN FALLS ON ACT ONE

Go to Miss Fit's and swap the Squirrel book for the Enigman book that she's reading. Return to the robot makers and ask him a question from the Enigman book. When his head blows off, take the plunger from the counter and head for the WACME building in Zanydu. To get rid of the Fish-Flushing guard, use the two levers to set the clock to 6pm. Now go to the Fish Flushing Facility, examine the toilet paper and the toilet. Use the plunger to unblock the toilet and then drop the red fish into the bowl. Flush the handle again to catch another fish. You need the Sole. And that's the green one. Finally, when you've got the fish, return to see Bricabrac in the palace. Enter the room on the right and plug the components into the Cutifier. They are:

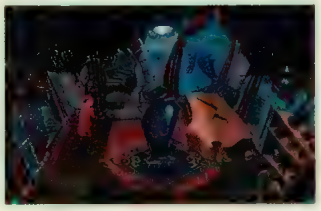
Roll (rock); cloak (dagger); stars (stripes); sole (heart); bells (whistles); spit (polish); pins (needles); nuts (bolts); chain (ball); arrow (bow); pepper (salt).

Cue Act Two...

THE DUNGEON, THE STUPID GUARD

When the guard's back is turned, at the moment when he's about to sneeze, pick up the welcome mat on the floor. Your first attempt will reveal a crystal, but the second will be successful. To escape, use the mat on the bars of the cell to create a dust cloud. This makes the guard sneeze and releases the key which you can use to unlock the door. Grab your belongings and listen carefully to the Mynah bird, noting down its babble carefully. Leaving north, examine the Climatron then retrace your steps and go up the stairs to the first-floor landing.

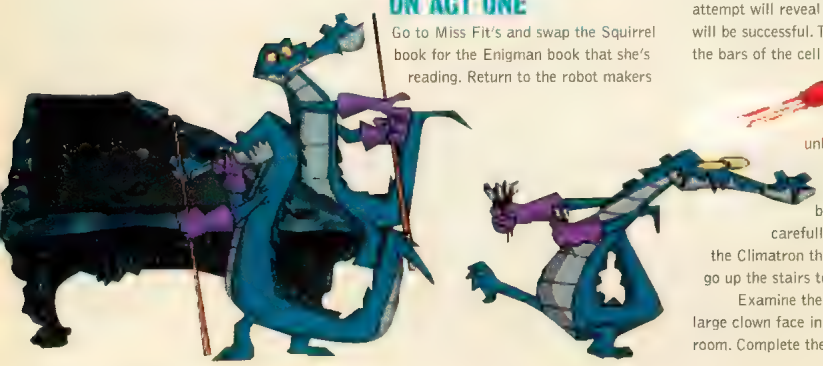
Examine the fish bowl then click on the large clown face in the eastern end of the room. Complete the 'Simon Says' game to open the door, talk to Spike the clown and then return to the Climatron. Open the iris door by pushing the button. Put on the fly suit and climb the air vent. In the bathroom hide in the shower or nip back in the vent to avoid the curious gators. If you get caught, you'll get thrown back in your cell. Although the guard is wearing a gas mask this time, talk to him to get him to take it off and then repeat the mat/dust manoeuvre to escape. If you do manage to hide, open the cabinet and take the chloroform wipes that you find there.



HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR FISH?

Go to Spike's padded cell and when he removes his nose to powder his face, wipe the red nose with chloroform. When he passes out, pick up the pin and a balloon. Return to the Climatron room and, by using the pin as a lever, set the heat output to 'extremely hot'. After a cut scene shows the fish being boiled out of its bowl, walk up to the first floor landing to find Buster on the floor. As the water is boiling, return to the Climatron, set it to normal and rush back up again to reach the bowl before the fish dives back in. If you don't make it, simply repeat the boiling/cooling process until you do. Grab the treasure chest and open it to find a key.

Walk up the stairs to the second floor landing and take note of the layout of the ☛



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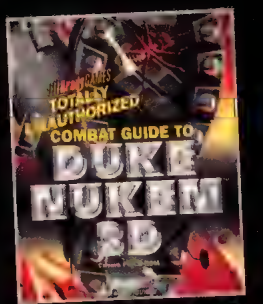

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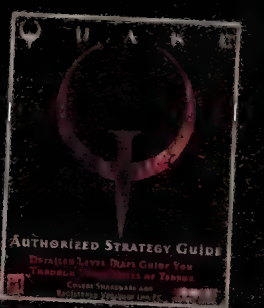

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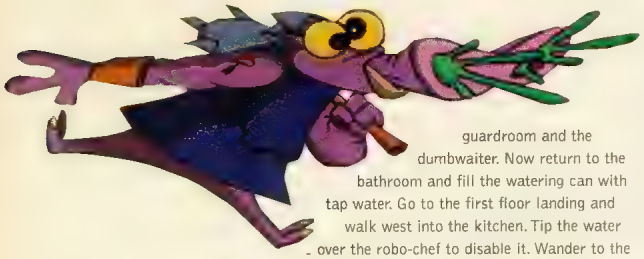


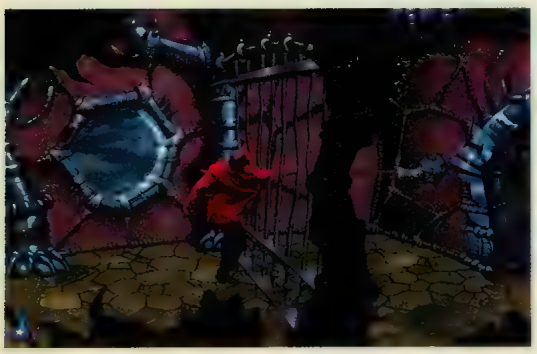
guardroom and the dumbwaiter. Now return to the bathroom and fill the watering can with tap water. Go to the first floor landing and walk west into the kitchen. Tip the water over the robo-chef to disable it. Wander to the second floor landing again and use the

doorway to the east. In here, you'll find a knight in armour and a pressure pad, but the doorway to it is barred by a gate. A bookcase near the doorway has books which can be pulled out. If you didn't note down the Mynah Bird's riddle, go back and do it now.

IT NEVER WORKS IN REAL LIFE

If you pull the books out in the correct order, the bookcase slides back to reveal a doorway that leads to the surveillance room. Use the music box to send the guard to sleep, then examine the security monitor until you get a picture of the knight in the room above. Use the magnet with the riveted ceiling panel to move the knight over the pressure pad. As this tile goes down, another pops up and as the knight is moved over this next one, yet another pops up in its place. After the fourth tile, the gate opens and you can explore the room freely. Get the knight's gauntlet as you pass and then head through the doorway to the north.

This leads to the armoury, where the PTP are playing cards. Before you touch anything, return to the Climatron and get the pin. Go back to the armoury and open the nearby crate with it. When the crate opens, Ray Frog is released. He'll give you a crystal before escaping unnoticed by the PTP. To get to the handy pile of TNT, jump into the crate and close the lid. Move towards the

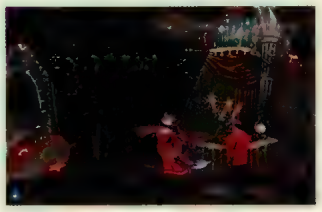


explosive, grab it and then move back. Go back to the kitchen.

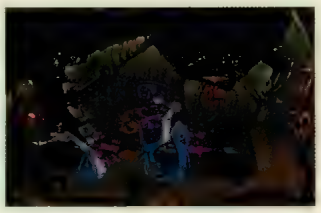
ANYBODY GOT A LIGHT?

Grab a turkey and use a stick of TNT with it. With the explosive firmly wedged in the bird's behind, open the stove door and light the TNT's fuse. Put the turkey-bomb in the dumbwaiter and then send it up to the guardroom. When the guards start fighting over the turkey, it explodes, killing everyone and blowing the room to smithereens. Walk up to the second floor landing and enter the room that you've just blown up. Grab the pool cue that survived the blast and examine the heads on the banisters. At the end of each is a gargoyle head and the one on the left opens like a giant PEZ dispenser to reveal a crystal.

Go back to the bathroom. Open the door,



peek at the guards and then hide in the shower when they spot you. To lay a trap for them, push the plug into the sink and turn on the tap. When the sink overflows, use the fly suit to climb down the air vent to the Climbatron room. Put the pin back into the Climbatron control and turn it to 'extremely cold'. Climb back up to the bathroom to see that the floor is covered with ice. Now open the door to attract the guards' attention. When they rush in, they will slip on the ice and go sliding out of the window.



MS. FORTUNE, GEDDIT?

Leave the bathroom and return to the gargoyle heads. Push down the horn on the left head and instead of moving over to the right head, walk up to the third floor landing. Now head towards the bathroom, slip on the fly suit and descend down the air vent. Go up to the first floor landing and then up to the second floor. You should be standing by the right gargoyle head. Open the head to reveal a crystal. You should now have four, each one a different colour. Don't go up to the fourth floor just yet. The evil Ms. Fortune is waiting to hypnotise the unwary adventurer. The jail cells beckons again...

* If at any point you get caught again, you'll get thrown back into the dungeon. This time the guard is taking no chances and he's hoovering the whole place trying to get it dust-free. To escape, switch off the vacuum cleaner when the guard has his back to the cell. When he looks quizzically at the nozzle, wondering what is wrong, turn the vacuum's dial from 'suck' to 'blow' and then switch the power back on. Hello dust-cloud, bye-bye guard. (It's either this or he leaves a short note saying that he's given up and that the key is under the mat.)

THE ACCIDENT-PRONE HERO

The only place left unexplored now is the room on the third floor, and the door to it can be opened using the treasure chest key. Climb up the side of the bookshelf to try and get the cool sunglasses. Flick the switch on the wall that has been revealed by the falling bookcase and then, after the mayhem, use a chair to try and get the glasses from atop the stuffed ass. When they then fall onto a Venus Fly Trap, slip on the fly suit and try speaking to the ravenous plant. This doesn't work, however, and the glasses finally end up in a rather tasteful-looking vase. By now the whole room should be a mess. Get the sunglasses (which have mirrored lenses) by smashing the vase with the mallet.

Now for the fourth floor. Put on the mirrored sunglasses and enter Ms. Fortune's room. When she tries to hypnotise you, the

hypnotic beam is reflected back at her and soon she is under your control. Tell her to follow you out to the landing and to place her paw in the hand-recognition security device. With a click the door will open and you can tip-toe quietly into Nefarious' HQ.

SO THIS IS IT THEN?

Pull the lever on the wall and when it jams halfway, place the four crystals in the four empty sockets in the wall panel. Pull the lever again to open the hatch and to reveal a trigger device. Grab the trigger and then flick the switches that control the lights, the door between the HQ and the launch room, the force field surrounding the Malevolator and the launch bay itself, so that you can get to the craft and fly it safely away. Walk through the open door, sit back and enjoy the smoothly animated finale. That's it. There is no more. Thank you for flying the PC GAMER *Toonstruck* Solution, we hope you had a pleasant journey. PCG

Toonstruck

Toonstruck was reviewed in the December issue of PC GAMER, where it received a highly recommended 90%.

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TIE Fighter

Classic SOLUTION

Playing Guide

To coincide with *TIE Fighter*'s re-release from White Label this month, PC GAMER gets back to basics and tells you how to annihilate the rebel scum in one easy lesson.

Classic game

It's a constant source of irritation for software houses around the world that no-one has ever been able to usurp *TIE Fighter*'s position as the premier space combat game. Over two years after it was originally released it has appeared on White Label from Virgin and as part of the LucasArts Collector's CD. If you have never played it or its predecessor, X-Wing, you're missing out on one of the PC's best ever games. We placed it at number 4 in our all-time Top 100 last year. Its re-release coincides with the imminent arrival of *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* and the approach of the Special Edition Star Wars films, and for all these reasons we present these *TIE Fighter* classic tips.

This guide is split into two main sections. The first deals with general hints, tips and techniques that apply to any situation you'll find yourself in. The second, on the other hand, takes a detailed look at the strengths and weaknesses of each of the six craft you get to fly and what you'll be flying against.

IN THE BEGINNING

Although *TIE Fighter* enables you to jump straight into a battle and start crushing the rebellion immediately, it's well worth taking time out to train and qualify on each craft beforehand. Not only do you get a promotion and some nice certificates and medals, but you also learn a lot that's useful later on.

The Training Simulator

This relatively simple obstacle course is good for sussing out *TIE Fighter*'s basic controls, and demonstrates the main differences between the various craft – their speed and weaponry.

To qualify on a ship you must finish Level 8. Bear in mind that the course is essentially passive – nothing shoots at you, and hitting things doesn't damage your ship – so when flying a fighter with shields, turn the recharge rate down to minimum to gain speed. Likewise, keep the laser recharge rate at normal until your lasers are running low, and then increase it for a while.

The TIE Advanced and Defender pose a unique problem in the Training Simulator – they're both too fast! If you turn the shield recharge to minimum, you'll find yourself smacking into things all the time on the later levels, so put the laser recharge up to maximum to compensate, and be prepared to lower your speed even further if necessary.

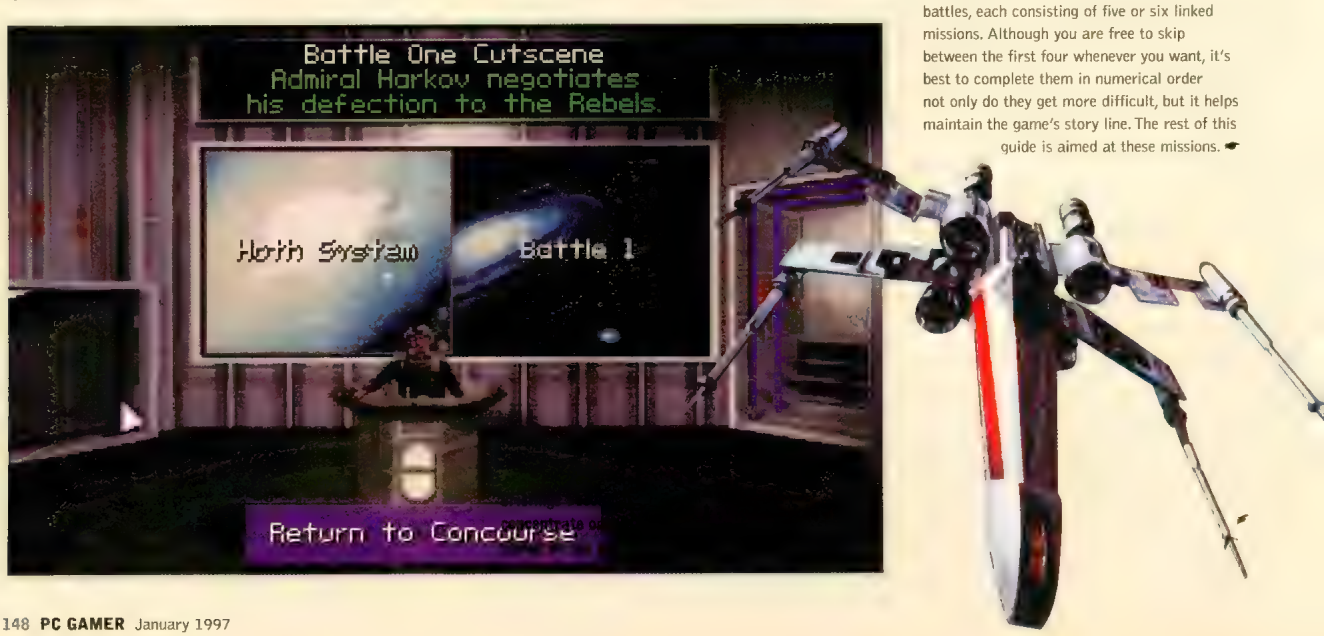
The Combat Chamber

Whereas the Training Simulator gives you a good idea of how the ships fly, the Combat Chamber introduces you to the kind of situations you'll find in actual battles. For each craft there are four progressively more difficult and more 'realistic' (i.e. more like actual events) missions. Even if you skip the Training Simulator, you really should fly all these missions because they enable you to experiment and gain experience without putting your pilot at risk, as well as introduce most of the objectives you'll face later on – from identifying neutral craft to taking out minefields or attacking capital

ships. Other than the instructions given on-screen in the earlier missions, there is little that refers specifically to these missions - treat them as battles and use the rest of this guide to help you out.

The Battles

TIE Fighter's campaign is split into seven battles, each consisting of five or six linked missions. Although you are free to skip between the first four whenever you want, it's best to complete them in numerical order not only do they get more difficult, but it helps maintain the game's story line. The rest of this guide is aimed at these missions. ☛



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TAKE CONTROL

It might sound obvious, but it's important to learn and understand the controls if you're going to do well. Outside of the basic movement, firing and targeting controls, the majority of *TIE Fighter*'s key commands are designed to make life easier for you. Read the manual and play around in the Combat Chamber until you've mastered them. You'll not only be better at playing, you'll have more fun too.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

A flash way of saying 'knowing what's going on', situational awareness is the key to success in *TIE Fighter*. You might be the best pilot in the Empire's history and a master of your starfighter's controls, but if you're not in the right place, attacking the right thing at the right time, you'll fail miserably. Luckily, *TIE Fighter* contains a whole range of features designed to help you keep track of what's going on, estimate what's going to happen in the near future and then do something about it.

The first is the Mission Briefing itself. As well as telling you your main objectives, this gives you an idea of the starting positions of craft – and, by talking to your briefing officer, what you'll be fighting too. Remember to speak to the shadowy figure if he's there and get your secondary objectives.

As soon as the mission starts, go to the Goals screen. This gives you the specific mission objectives, and often a hint as to what ships may be appearing later on. Exit the Goals screen and go to the Map, taking a close look at what's about and where they are. Now decide on your first target – and go for it.

Throughout the mission, keep an eye on the Goals, Map and Log screens. The best way to do this is to check them immediately after each combat engagement (i.e. after blowing up or disabling a ship). By doing this, you'll know what's going on, be able to spot dangers and problems early on and have time to deal with them. This is of great importance in missions which involve defence – spotting attacking groups before they can do you harm is vital.

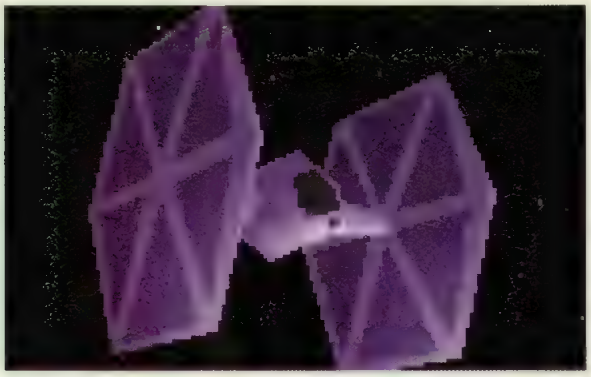
ELS SETTINGS

However, awareness of your starfighter's condition and current performance is just as important as an awareness of the overall situation. What this really comes down to is ensuring that you use the ELS (Engine, Laser, Shield) settings effectively and to your advantage.

What makes this more complicated, though, is the fact that each fighter you fly behaves slightly differently. The TIE Interceptor's maximum laser recharge rate, for example, is phenomenal – it can actually charge up while firing at maximum rate. Nevertheless, there are some general points that apply across the board.

- Lasers always recharge faster than shields. This means it's more efficient to transfer energy away from shields than to up the shield recharge rate.

- ELS management in unshielded ships is remarkably easy. In normal conditions just leave the laser recharge at normal. For extra speed drop it down - and when in combat put it up. It's that simple.
- Your first priority on starting a mission should be to fully charge the shields (if you've got them). Immediately transfer all laser energy to your shields, put shield and laser recharge rates up to maximum, and keep transferring energy across from lasers until they're fully charged. At this point, drop the recharge rates down to normal until combat starts.
- To get the most speed – and yet still be able to fight effectively – drop shield recharge down to minimum and put the laser recharge up to increased or maximum, then keep transferring energy across to the shields, a little at a time.



Always keep an eye on your laser and shield levels during a mission, and get used to playing around with the recharge rates and transferring energy around until it becomes second nature. Also get into the habit of spreading your shield evenly between fore and aft by hitting the shield key (S) three times whenever you've taken some damage.

WEAPONS

Weapons in *TIE Fighter* are basically divided into warheads and beams. While all craft have lasers, the other types of weapon are only available on certain fighters or in certain missions.

Warheads

There are six types of warhead in *TIE Fighter*, each with different characteristics. The common link between them is that all require a lock-on if they're to hit the target with any degree of accuracy – which means flying straight towards the object for some time. The most important thing to remember is to pull away once you've fired, otherwise the target will fire once you get in range. However, by moving away from the warhead you can easily divert the target's attention - and the weapon is then unlikely to get hit by any stray laser blasts. Also remember that your speed is added to the weapon's when you launch it.

Concussion Missiles: Only effective against enemy fighters and small craft, and best used while at a distance of about two kilometres. It's a good idea to save these for A-Wings and similar nasties – most of which need a couple of hits, so launch in pairs.

Proton Torpedoes: A good multipurpose weapon, effective against the slower fighters as well as moderate sized ships. Not so good against the real capital ships – they lack the required punch - but better than nothing.

Heavy Rockets: The best weapon for dealing with large ships, combining a significant bang with a good range.

Space Bombs: Unpowered and thus very short ranged, but the most powerful weapon available. It's best to release these as close as possible to the target and pull away quickly.

Advanced Missiles and Torpedoes: Improved versions of the basic missile and torpedo always use them when the opportunity arises.

Beams

Lasers: The most versatile weapon in the game, your trusty lasers will never let you down, provided you keep them nicely charged up. For more on the best configurations to use, see the run-down on the individual fighters over the page.

Ion Cannons: Ion cannons don't damage craft as such but scramble a ship's controls and electronics, effectively disabling the craft and putting it into a helpless, immobile state. Only use ion cannons when the situation specifically demands it.

The Tractor Beam

This weapon system, only available in the final stage of the game, slows

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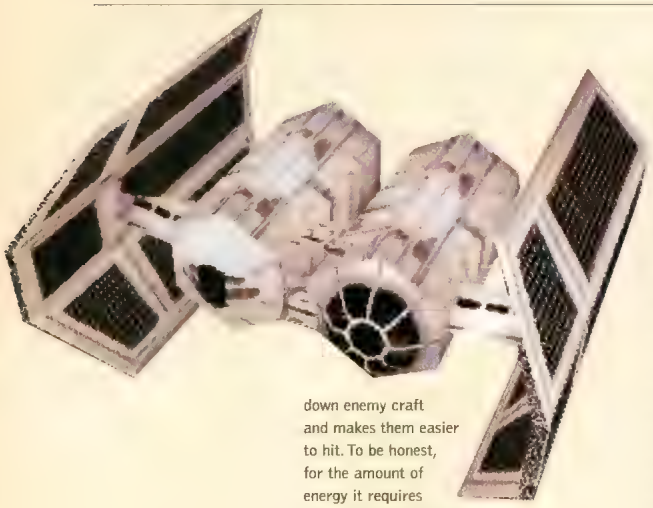


down enemy craft and makes them easier to hit. To be honest, for the amount of energy it requires it's not that effective, so you're probably better off reducing its recharge rate to minimum and making use of the extra speed it provides instead.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

During the course of *TIE Fighter*, you'll come up against a whole host of different ships, some more dangerous than others. While it's worth spending a few minutes comparing their statistics in the Tech Room, the numbers alone don't tell the whole story...

Rebel Craft

Z95 Headhunter: This obsolete fighter is dead common, especially in the earlier battles, with its pathetic shields and unimpressive speed and manoeuvrability. Dangerous only in large numbers.

Y-Wing: Although its shielding and armour are quite strong, the Y-Wing suffers from lack of speed. They pose the biggest threat during dogfighting when there's a risk you'll run into the back of them. Their ion cannons and torpedoes can also threaten large ships.

X-Wing: A good all-rounder, the X-Wing is well armed, fairly well protected and capable of decent speed. In the hands of a skilled pilot they can be very dangerous in a dogfight, and the torpedoes pose a moderate threat to larger ships.

A-Wing: Not particularly tough and quite lightly armed, the A-Wing is nevertheless one of the hardest ships to deal with because it's so amazingly fast. They're best dealt with by concussion missiles from a distance, but beware – the A-Wing may have the same idea. Once you get up close, your best bet is to maximise your speed and hope to get in a couple of good shots – A-Wings slow down noticeably once damaged.

B-Wing: Something of a super-charged Y-Wing, the B-Wing is heavily armed, incredibly tough, but only moderately agile. The biggest problem is that it can soak up such a vast amount of damage and still be very dangerous to large ships.

General Craft

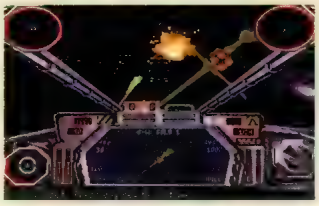
Shuttle: These are slow, unwieldy and make nice big targets. Beware of flying head-on into them, though, because their lasers can do a lot of damage given the chance. And be careful when matching speeds – flying along slowly behind an unmanoeuvrable shuttle makes you an excellent target for enemy fighters.

Transport: Virtually identical to shuttles (see above), except they're a slightly smaller target and, when armed with torpedoes, can pose a threat to large craft.

Escort Shuttle: Unless you've got a lot of missiles or torpedoes, you'd be taking a big risk attacking these in an unshielded ship. They've got some serious guns up front and the rear turret (which can also fire sideways) is a nightmare. In a shielded craft, divert all energy to forward shields and make repeated attack runs, equalising shields as you go past - don't match speeds and sit behind an Escort Shuttle under any circumstances.

Miscellaneous Craft

This covers all the various freighters, transporters, cargo craft and containers. As a rule, these are big, slow or non-moving targets that pose little or no threat and take a lot of pounding to destroy. However, occasionally some of the larger craft are armed with a



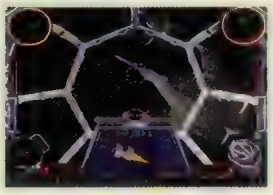
turbolaser turret or two, so don't go blazing in immediately. Make a fast fly-by and see what happens to prevent any nasty surprises.

Capital Ships

These are the big ships Frigates, Calamari Cruisers, Star Destroyers and so on (including Space Platforms – which don't move). The first thing to remember is that attacking these ships in a TIE Fighter or Interceptor is suicide. A TIE Bomber's only chance depends on launching a large supply of torpedoes, rockets or bombs from outside laser range. Capital ships, with their profusion of turrets and lasers, nearly always do some damage to an attacking fighter, so shielded craft are a must.

The second thing to bear in mind is that

you can attack and destroy various parts of the larger ships separately. By experimenting in the Combat Chamber with invulnerability turned on or by recording a mission and using the camera controls you should easily be able to pinpoint any weakly defended areas – the Calamari Light Cruiser's underside, for example. Once you've destroyed all the weapons in that area you'll be able to pummel the ship mercilessly without fear of retribution. So, to take out a large craft...



- Destroy any fighters protecting the ship (some will continue to launch fighters as you attack – it's best to deal with these as they're released, rather than let them build up to dangerous numbers).
- Make sure your lasers and shields are fully charged.
- Get into a position from where you can attack a weakly defended area.
- Soften up the target with any heavy weapons you have, while outside laser range if possible. Remember you can target specific locations with torpedoes and rockets, so try taking out as many weapons as you can at this point.
- Get in close enough to use your lasers and make repeated strafing attacks against any remaining defences, taking time to fully recharge your shields between runs.
- Blast away to your heart's content and blow the target to bits (this might take some time with the real biggies, so be patient).

Although not technically capital ships, Assault Transports and Corvettes should be treated in much the same way. A skilful pilot should still be able to deal with them in a TIE Interceptor or even a basic Fighter though.

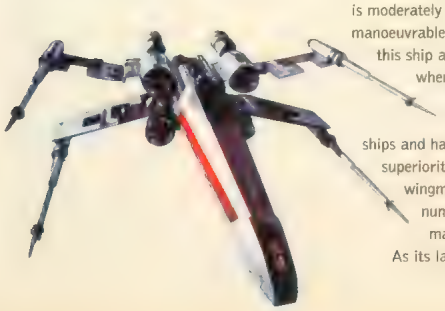
CHOOSING YOUR SHIP

TIE Fighter

The TIE Fighter is the most basic ship you can fly – and, in many respects, the weakest. It can only take two laser hits before it's destroyed, and even one is normally enough to blow its sensors and make it virtually useless. This means it's vital you keep a careful eye on the three threat indicators above the laser sight, and pull away sharply if one lights up.

On the plus side, the TIE Fighter is moderately fast and very manoeuvrable. In addition, you only fly this ship at the start of your career, where you normally only encounter the older and less dangerous enemy ships and have a strong numerical superiority. Make sure you use you wingmen well – strength in numbers is the TIE Fighter's main advantage.

As its lasers are right next to each other, always use dual fire – if one beam hits, the other will too.



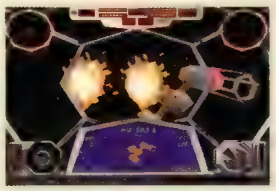
TIE Interceptor

A souped-up TIE Fighter, the Interceptor is faster, better armed and can take three or four hits. Despite this, it's still a fragile craft and you should be just as careful with it. The craft's main feature is the speed of its laser recharge – at maximum rate you can fire continuously and still build up charge! This means you'll normally only have to put it up to increased rate to maintain a full charge, which frees up more energy for your engines. Although not quite as critical as for the TIE Fighter, wingmen are still important and you should take care to assign them specific targets.

Due to the distance between its four lasers, configuring your weapons is more difficult. Dual fire is a good compromise for most situations, combining a good rate of fire with a higher chance of hitting, but single fire is best against defenceless targets such as containers.

TIE Bomber

The Bomber is the slowest of the unshielded craft, but also the toughest and most heavily armed. You can afford to soak up a good two or three hits before you're in any danger, and it can take up to six to destroy. It's just as well, though, because the sluggish responses combined with the need to fly straight at enemies acquiring locks



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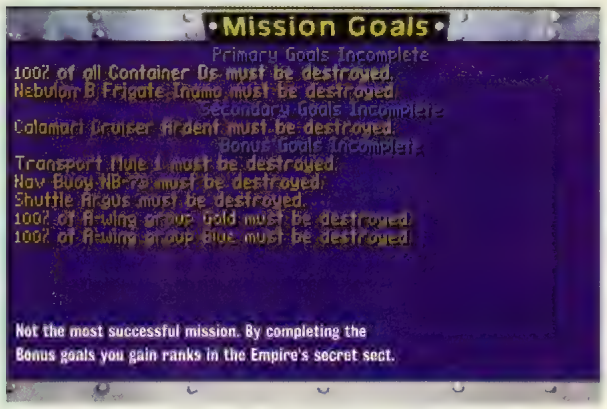
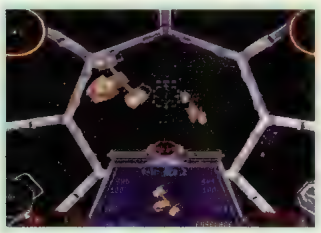

•Mission Goals•
Primary Goals Incomplete
100% of all Container Ds must be destroyed.
Nebulon B Frigate Inamo must be destroyed.
Secondary Goals Incomplete
Calamari Cruiser Ardent must be destroyed.
Bonus Goals Incomplete
Transport Mule 1 must be destroyed.
Hav Buoy NB-72 must be destroyed.
Shuttle Argus must be destroyed.
100% of A-wing group Gold must be destroyed.
100% of A-wing group Blue must be destroyed.
Not the most successful mission. By completing the
Bonus goals you gain ranks in the Empire's secret sect.

makes the Bomber a prime target.

Luckily, Bomber missions are normally supported by Fighter and/or Interceptor squadrons and a significant number of wingmen who you should use to make group attacks on your objectives.

In a couple of missions you'll be required to dogfight in this craft. You should selectively use missiles against the fastest enemies – but beyond that it's just a matter of keeping your laser recharge rate down to normal for as long as possible in order to maintain speed while fighting. Dual fire is



normally best in these situations, with single fire against non-threatening targets.

Assault Gunboat

The slowest and most unwieldy of the shielded craft, the Gunboat is also the one you'll be flying most of the time. Because of its hyperdive, the Gunboat is ideal for surprise raids, and with its ion cannons it's perfect for when something needs capturing.

To get the most out of the Gunboat, make maximum use of its shields and play around with the ELS settings as necessary. For dogfighting, it's best to drop the shield recharge to minimum and put the laser recharge up to maximum, then transfer energy across when the shields start to disperse. Luckily, the Gunboat can carry a very heavy warhead load – 12 missiles in total – which you should use to take out A-Wings and the like while you finish off Y-Wings and so on with your lasers. Like the TIE Fighter, these are right next to each other in the nose, so set them to dual fire at all times.

TIE Advanced

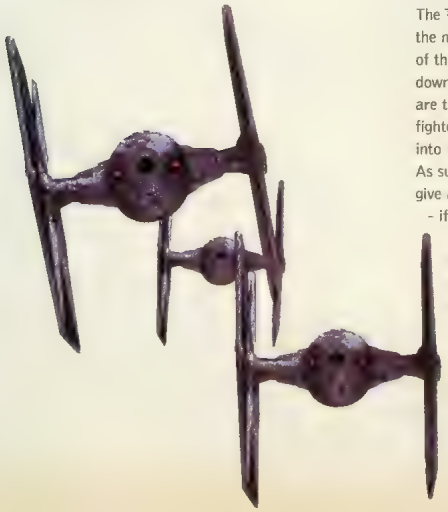
The TIE Advanced is a joy to fly and suitable for almost any type of mission. Even A-Wings pose little problem for its high speed and agility, strong shields and four laser cannons. It really is very impressive indeed. Unfortunately, you only gain access to it later on in the game, and it's only used in the toughest of missions (in some you're flying against Imperial traitors). It's when you have to fight enemy TIE Advanceds that you really begin to appreciate what a tough ship it is. As well as being a great fighter, the TIE Advanced is also ideal for attacking large ships. Its high speed means you can put shield and laser recharge rates up to maximum and still be going more than fast enough to attack other craft. It's normally best to use dual fire against fighters and single fire against large targets.

TIE Defender

The TIE Defender is, quite simply, the most ridiculously powerful ship of them all. It's insanely fast, loaded down with guns and has shields that are twice the strength of any other fighter. Even TIE Advanceds pale into insignificance next to this baby. As such, it's actually quite hard to give any useful advice about flying it – if you're good enough to have reached the last few missions (where this ship appears), then you shouldn't have many problems. To be honest, there's very little you can do wrong with a ship like this.

It's best to keep the lasers set to dual fire when dogfighting, and turn the tractor beam down to minimum recharge, unless you find it more useful than we did.

For a real challenge, try completing the first Combat Chamber mission after you've shot every container (thus triggering all the enemy ships to arrive at once). Have fun. PCG



TIE Fighter

TIE Fighter was the Game of the Month way back in issue 9 of PC GAMER. It was awarded a fine 94%

Fragile Allegiance

Playing Guide

Gremlin's *Fragile Allegiance* is one of the finest space games ever to drift through the PC GAMER offices. It is extremely tough, though – especially at the start. So let us be your intellectual Ripley and help you deal with those pesky aliens. By NATHAN JONES

Hey you! I was once like you. Poor, nearly destitute, making my way cleaning gentlemen's visors down at the spaceport. But then I discovered TetraCorp and they gave me a chance to start again. A new life in the off-world colonies and all that. And you can make it in the asteroid business too, by following my handy hints below. Send me some money, and if the tips don't work, I'll think about sending it back.

FOR A GOOD FIGHT, START RIGHT

You won't get very far without solid foundations. Remember the Chinese proverb about doubling the amount of rice on every square on the chess-board until you have veritable paddy-fields by square 30? That's probably relevant here, somehow.

In less oriental verbiage, use your working capital wisely. Your initial money should instantly be put to work generating more funds. At the start, this means getting your mines up and running. Later on, excess funds can be put to work developing those mighty fleets and securing new territories. Remember, *Fragile Allegiance* is a financial game your credits aren't worth the plastic their encoded into if they're not begetting more credits.

So while you might hate the Mauna (and who wouldn't? Particularly their mothers...) and have your heart set on pulverising them each new level, it's important to get the show running smoothly first. Build a successful mining operation that pulls in the most credits possible. Other races, individual asteroids and even your own workers are expendable, provided you get the maximum return.

BACK TO BASICS

No matter what ore it contains or where it is on the map, it's best to develop your first asteroid as your main centre of operations. After all, it's likely to be in the middle of your eventual sphere of influence. Also, with careful conquest, it will be buffered from alien attacks by your surrounding empire. Defend it to the hilt, all the same.

Obviously, your first asteroid will need life support, power storage generators, mines and so on. It should also have a missile silo, satellite silo, weapons factory, ship yard and control centre. Put them all to work as soon as you get them (for instance, start building scout ships and looking for new asteroids straight away).

Use this one asteroid to keep all your ore. This saves confusion when the any-old-ore Traders, or indeed the federal transporter, come sauntering into range, asking for an asteroid to visit. You'll soon have multiple space rocks, so it's best to set yourself up as a Tesco's rather than one hundred Mr Singhs.

Initially, you'll need to move your ore with your transporter. Later on, though, you'll be thrilled to purchase the ore teleporter blueprints from Sci-Tek, so it's all done for you. Wealthy is wise.

A gravity nullifier is money well spent on your first asteroid, since it stops rogue asteroids wiping out your work in one catastrophic collision (just ask the dinosaurs).

SUPPORT LIFE

Keeping your colonists alive is vital, what with the unreliability of robots. If we could do without them, believe me I'd know!

When you first arrive on an asteroid the transporter automatically builds a CPU. Before you race to build mines, pop down an air processor, a food production plant and hydration facilities. This will keep your people fed from the off.

The alternative is to build an Environmental Control Centre. These produce a small amount of food, water air and power – enough for emergencies. Build an ECC if you're strapped for cash (because you're running a tight operation where most of your money is always invested – good work) or if you only need to stay on the asteroid long

Building lots of small fighters early on in the game will boost your ego as well as your fighting prowess.

(Above) There's a perfect way to colonise every asteroid, depending on its resources and strategy in the sector. Rich deposits of cheap ores require mass mining.

(Left) Fewer mines make less immediate demands on your current account, but you'll need to be patient to exhaust the asteroid. Remember to defend your colonies.

enough to rip out the small supplies of precious Traxium and Nexos you've found.

SOCIAL SECURITIES

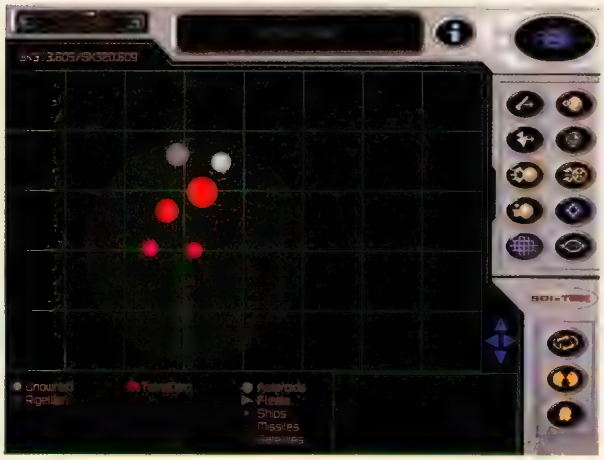
People being, all too sadly, people, you might need to add security centres, medical centres and radiation filters. Stick them all on your first asteroid, just in case. Later on you can play the situation by ear. Don't bother building Resi-blocks – they just attract hundreds of migrant workers, overpopulation and the general skull-duggery that encourages.

MR BUY RIGHT

You'll get most of your advanced goods from Sci-Tek, by purchasing the blueprints. This is all to the good, Sci-Tek is virtually TetraCorp's brother company, but remember that no-one uses and abuses like a sibling. Spend wisely, always considering the return you'll get.

There are a few goodies you'll want as soon as possible. Topping the list is the Seismic Penetrator, which enables you to mine the most valuable ores. (You need these ores to build certain equipment, and for general credit balance enhancement.)

The MK2 Mine and MK2 Deep Bore Mine will double the speed of your mining facilities. Do we need ☛



to talk cash flow here, or have you been paying attention?

Anti-missile pods. These stop you getting bombarded early on, and are thus vital.

If you find you're off to a flying start, Sci-Tek have lots of other ways of liberating your funds. The following are useful luxuries:

Repair facility – You can set these to look after your best colonies while you go off to desecrate pastures new.

Asteroid engines – Glorified ram-raiding for the extra-terrestrial masses.

Shield x50 multiplier – Extra protection for your fleets.

Construction droids Help you build your mighty fleets even more quickly.

Ore teleporter - Did you buy *Fragile Allegiance* to play a coalman? Enough said.

Anti-virus missile – don't buy these from Sci-Tek, buy a couple from a trader. You'll save credits since the blue-print is very expensive, considering you're unlikely to need very many at once.

One final word to the wise. Don't spend all your money at Sci-Tek. There are often better ways of spending your money, particularly at the start of the game. Having said that, if you can get a piece of kit like the MK2 mines relatively early on, you will (if left alone) score a devastating advantage long term.

HITTING HARD

If you're going to play an overtly aggressive game, you need to do so from the start. As soon as you've built your construction facilities, start creating small strong fleets of scouts and assault craft. As these are assembling, gather as much information on the aliens as you can using scout ships and spy satellites. A few tips:

- Don't bother with Combat Eagles at the start of the game. They're too expensive and they consume a lot of ore. Concentrate on your scouts and assault craft.
- Don't waste expensive weapons on your first plucky yet weedy fighters. Photon cannons and napalm orbs will do just fine. Costly guns won't significantly reduce the chances of their weedy owners exploding.
- Build fleets of 20-30 cheap craft. These should be able to tackle most early alien colonies. You'll know when your enemies have begun to build better defences, as these fleets will be annihilated in seconds.
- Remember you will soon have to start funding expensive craft like Combat Eagles and Destructors – as soon as your weaker fleets begin to fall. Plan accordingly. It's a good idea to buy the x50 shield from Sci-Tek to protect your investment.

ATTACK! ATTACK! NO STOP!

There is a logical order which you should follow if you're to overcome your enemies. It is not:

- Stumble across an alien outpost.
- Launch everything you've got at it.

It is:

- Stumble across an alien outpost.
- Employ agents to gather vital information about the colony.
- Get the same agents to tamper with defences and retaliation facilities.
- Now bombard the defences with a rain of missile death.
- Finally, send in your fleets to destroy any remaining buildings and to mop up alien craft survivors.

ROCK ROCKETS

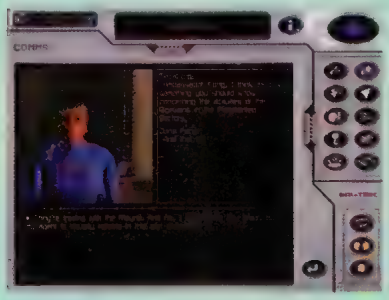
Missiles are a vital part of war in *Fragile Allegiance*, but remember that they are inherently awful. Missiles are clumsy and just as explosive on empty moon rock as on the buildings you actually wanted them to hit. Save your missiles for heavily colonised asteroids. These are likely to be protected with anti-missile turrets. Check first with a spy satellite. The aliens will laugh into their tentacles at the site of half a million credits worth of fireworks lighting the sky.

To wipe the sorry excuse for a smile from their faces:

- Always launch from several different silos at once.
- Launch lots of cheap missiles as well as a few expensive ones. It's the shoaling strategy – your cheap missiles act as decoys and soak up some of the defences.
- Consider freezing the asteroid with the

Know thy neighbour

There is no such thing as community. What a wonderful TetraCorp employee Mrs T. would have made. Below is a summary of *Fragile Allegiance*'s rational self-seekers, and some tips on dealing with them rationally for your gain.



SUPERVISORS

Don't prevaricate; these guys are worth the cost. Employing supervisors will enable you to concentrate your efforts on conquest, rather than day-to-day colony management.

There is a strict correlation between the price paid for a supervisor and his or her quality. Get the best you can. I can personally recommend Makepeace Fox, Thomas Lorca and Andreas Perrers as about the best in the business.

Keep your supervisors well paid, or they'll turn nasty, which will cost you a lot more in the long run.

TRADERS

Important for obtaining specialist items and medicines like Vir-Attack and Bio-Fort, traders are also vitally important if you're to make money. It's tempting to sell your ore to the Federal Transporter, but laziness costs. Compare the prices they're offering with the transporter, and keep notes every time it visits to follow trends in price. Traxium and Nexos are the most important money-spinners, and also the most volatile.

I wouldn't let Traxium go for less than 60,000 credits and I'd ask near 200,000 for Nexos.

The luxury goods, tools, machinery and other goods the traders bring can be bought and sold for profit, but to make money takes some effort on your part. You may prefer to just stick to ores. If you are tempted to play the markets, do it in style. You'll only get worthwhile rewards from big risks, so send back those ten fur coats and order ten thousand. Apart from the Anti-Virus missile, buy weapons blue-prints from Sci-Tek and make your own. It's far cheaper in the long term.

AGENTS

Don't skimp on agents – always employ them before going to war to collect as much tactical information on your enemies as possible. Agents should usually be your first line of attack in battle, since their covert sabotage missions can save you big bucks on missiles. They're even handy in peacetime, just to let you know what your rivals are up to.

The best agents can all but destroy a colony single handed. They're expensive though, and best employed tactically to take out a critical asteroid when fighting on several fronts.

Personally, I recommend Vyvyan Beauregard and Scot Mandelson.

ALIENS

Make as many non-aggression pacts with your rival cultures as possible. You can always break them (and so can they) but you'll still be fairly certain that you'll not be attacked by two or three cultures at once. Years of experience in the Fragmented Sectors has made me very cynical when it comes to aliens. They break down simply as follows:

The Mauna – Kill them. They're aggressive, nasty and they'll try to get you first.

The Artemians and the Mikotaj – Not as lethal as the Mauna, they'll still cause headaches with random, senseless and profit-impairing war-mongering. Best destroyed after you've got rid of the Mauna.

The Braccatians – Fine unless provoked, when they'll fight back with a vengeance. So don't provoke them. Until you can destroy them.

The Acheans and the Regelians – Easy going neighbours, they should be putty in your hands.

Stasis missile. This will enable you to launch loads of missiles, almost at your leisure. Missiles arriving at a frozen asteroid hang in the air until stasis runs out. Then they all come crashing down. How d'ya like that, Mr Qu'rdo Manuau-Squeeg?

FLEETER FLEETS

It's obvious, but many people forget all about repairing their fleets. If you want to get the best out of them, it's much cheaper to keep your craft in good repair. Get the blue-prints for the Repair Facility from Sci-Tek.

To repair Scout Ships, Assault Craft and Combat Eagles, land them in the hangars.

Medium and large ships need a Space Dock in orbit. As the craft fly around the asteroid, the Space Dock and Repair Facility mend the craft.

It may take months to return all your craft to full working order, but that's still quicker then building them all from scratch. Build a second Repair Facility if you're rushed for time. PCG

Fragile Allegiance

Fragile Allegiance scored an impressive 91% in issue 38 of PC GAMER.

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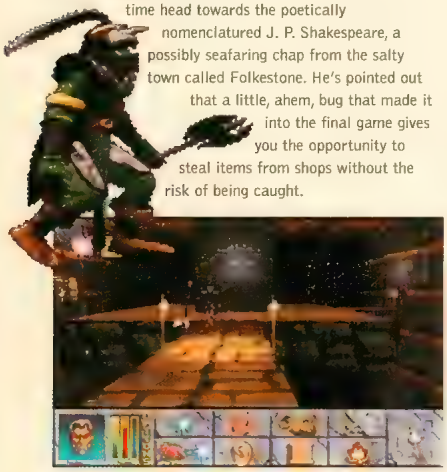
Foul play

Bringing out the cheat in you.

You really ought to be turning over a new leaf at the start of this lovely fresh year. You shouldn't read about these codes. Oh, go on then... By STEVE OWEN

DAGGERFALL

Hey, hey! This page has turned into a Reader's Participation Section, which is just great. Thanks this time head towards the poetically nomenclatured J. P. Shakespeare, a possibly seafaring chap from the salty town called Folkestone. He's pointed out that a little, ahem, bug that made it into the final game gives you the opportunity to steal items from shops without the risk of being caught.



Shakey tells us that it definitely works in weapon smiths and armouries, definitely doesn't work in the bookshops, but it might work in the others. It's a simple technique. Pop into the shop and loiter until gone closing time, which should be midnight. Select the shelf as you would if you were actually buying something, but instead of the normal buy-and-steal menus appearing, you just get your backpack on screen. Drag anything you want to steal into your inventory.

Of course, the beauty is that if you have a wagon, you can sell your ill-gotten gains on to others, making a tidy fortune in the process.

Remember though, kids, stealing is WRONG. Very wrong. Couldn't be more wrong. Just say no.

FATAL RACING

How remiss. Despite producing what we thought was a lovely list of cheats for *Fatal Racing* three months ago, Stuart Rankin from sunny Coulsdon, an attractive town in the gloriously English county of Surrey, mentioned that we missed two. Cheers. So, here's a bit more.

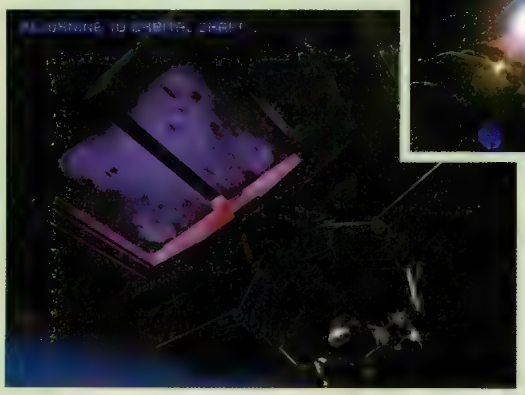
When asked for your name, put in either **GOLD BOY** or **MREPRISE** to begin the premier or bonus cups. Have we missed anything else?

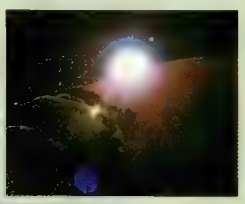
SHELLSHOCK

Only just come out full price, and now about to appear on budget! Golly gee, games die quickly these days. So, let's say our goodbyes with a quick cheat. Whatever mission 'y'all' on, press Esc and then type **RATTY RAT RATTY** to make yourself utterly invincible. Gosh. PCG

SHATTERED STEEL

This mammoth collection of cheats (with a gentle spattering of tips towards the end) should make *Shattered Steel* a dream to play. For the cheats, just type them in while you are playing.



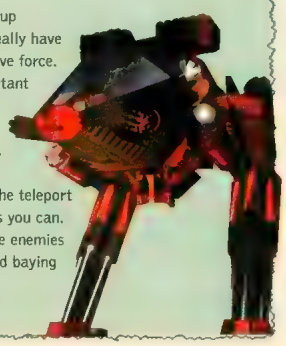


HENCHMAN – creates a Shiva to help you out
RATSNEST – gives you a medium laser
NUMBERCHANGER – gives you a rolling mine
BCUA – an 18 pack of very large rockets
KWAHAMOT – radar missiles
FISHHEADS – infra red missiles
LOCKANDLOAD – maximum ammo for all weapons
RODRIGO – two small helicopters will help you out
MONKEYSLUNCH – it, um, messes up some of the graphics, sorry
CHERNOBYL – a large bang

And when you are in multi-player mode, you can use these ones.
PLAYCD [track number] – play a favourite audio CD
EJECT – look, ma, I'm flying

But these cheats might ruin the fun you're having. If you just want some advice, these little tipettes might see you fighting another day.

- Take on enemy Mechs one by one rather than bravely taking on a pack. Do your best to encourage one to wander away from the others.
- When you play a mission that involves protecting other craft, use your Bot (your bipedal shell rather than your anus) as a shield. Run around like a nutter taking out stray shots, a bit like Clint Eastwood did in In The Line Of Fire.
- When you blow up buildings they actually have some extra explosive force. Shoot the unimportant facilities as a load of unsuspecting enemies walk past.
- At the start of missions, destroy the teleport beacons as soon as you can. It stops loads more enemies from appearing and baying for your blood.



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Q&A

A New Year has dawned, but alas, the illuminating light of realisation still eludes some of our brave readers stuck in the perilous wastes of adventure-land. Fear not though, for Q&A is here to offer a guiding hand. **By GRANT RENCOURT**

Customer Help-Lines

Most publishers offer their own games support service, so if you're stuck on one of their titles, it's always worth phoning them directly.

Acclaim	0171 344 5000
Domark	0181 780 2224
Empire	0181 343 9143
EA and Origin	01753 546465
Elite	01922 55852
Gremlin	0114 275 3423
(ask for customer support)	
GameTek	01753 553445
(ask for customer support)	
Infogrames	0891 244444
Interplay	01235 821666
(ask for customer support)	
MicroProse	01454 893 900
Ocean	0161 839 0999
Psygnosis	0151 282 3333
Sierra	01734 303171
Virgin and LucasArts	0171 368 2266

DAY OF THE TENTACLE

Q Can you please help me with *Day Of The Tentacle*?

1. How do you get the gold ink pen from the table without Thomas noticing, and how do you light a fire in the same room? I have got the cigar lighter.

2. How do you get the contract out of the safe without getting your hands stuck?

3. I have got the video tape but cannot use it in the video recorder as the lady will not let me.

Lloyd Wood, Gloucester

A 1. You'll need to get rid of Thomas by starting a fire. To do this, you'll need to get Jefferson's log. He's very concerned about Washington, so make Washington look cold by replacing his teeth with some chattering teeth.

2 & 3. You need to get Fred to open the safe for you. Try the following. Talk to Edna about the way to Fred's heart. Put him to sleep by using the decaf coffee from the kitchen in his mug. He keeps the safe combination in his head. You need somewhere to observe Fred carefully. Watch Dr Fred on TV in Edna's room. (Don't you wish you could push that Edna woman out of the way? The problem is that sword on the statue. If only the statue were right-handed...) Have Hoagie get the left-handed hammer from Red's workshop, and switch it for the right-handed one in Jed and Ned's room, then push Edna. You still need to slow down the TV image. Get the video tape from Green Tentacle's room. If Fred is still too fast for you, try instant replay. Use the tape with the VCR, then press the red record button. Rewind the tape, then change the right-hand switch to EP. Now play the tape again. Bernard now knows the combination and can open the safe.

FATE OF ATLANTIS

Q I am totally stuck on this game. I managed to get to the crab raft but cannot fix the robot guarding the door. The pieces I have are the crescent semicircle, the piece with the man on it and the cog. Do I need any more pieces? If so, where are they? I have lots of orichalcum.

Daniel Howe, Cambridge

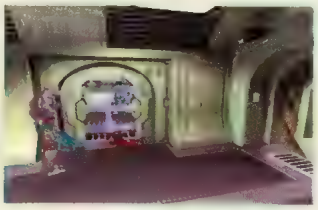
A Okay, try this. Use the ladder on the sentry statue and open the chest plate. Put the spoked wheel and the statue part on the middle peg and the crescent gear on the right-hand pegs. Put the round gear on the bottom-left peg and then put an orichalcum bead in the centre. It sounds like you have all the right parts, so you should be okay. After doing this, pick up the hinge pin. Go back to the dungeon and give Sophia the hinge pin.

BIOFORGE

Q Can you please help me with *Bioforge*? I've spent hours trying to stop the reactor from blowing up in the reactor room, but I just can't move fast enough. Is there a cheat that will give me turbo speed or can I carry on with the game without bothering with the reactor room?

R.A. Shenton, Stoke-On-Trent

A The reactor room is a crucial part of the plot and you need to stabilise it to stop it blowing. Try the following choice clues. The reactor guardbot only fires on humanoids. Anything else would find it a real pushover... Use the forklift bot from the room at the end of the hall to dispose of the reactor guardbot.



(There's a forklift control monitor in that room.) Now you can enter the reactor (wearing your envirosuit). You can't defeat the alien in combat, but you do need to get rid of it before you can finish your job. Turn the bridge on. Pull one of the two pylon levers down. Shoot the alien twice to get it angry at you. Run back across the bridge and turn off it when the alien starts following. Now go back, pull the other pylon lever down and punch in the code you got from the control room's wall monitor to activate the power-down button on the reactor monitor. Turn off the reactor and breath a sigh of relief.

THE DIG

Q Please can you help? I am playing *The Dig* and am stuck in the nexus. I have managed to get the power flowing in the columns, but it's the doors with the coloured buttons I can't get to open?

Tyrone Duke

A To open the coloured doors, click on all the panels near the doors and examine the purple rod. Click on the buttons until they match the purple rod – do this with all the panels (doors will not open yet). Exit panels, click on ramp (bottom of screen near dark tunnel). At the ramp, click on edge, look at unattached lens, click on edge to see yourself

Over To You...

In the last few months, Over To You has been alive with contributions from our gallant readership. Keep those tips coming and you could win yourself a prize in the form of a top game dug from the PC GAMER software vaults.

A With regards to **Dave Middleton** who wanted help with ***Dungeon Master 2*** (Issue 31), the last clan piece is in a building past a graveyard (use Harm Non-Material for any ghosts) and a swamp (Attack Minions and Fireballs work well). You'll have to cross a floor with moving pits more than once to obtain the key. Try sending a scout minion ahead of you and then move quickly to its square – you should then avoid any mishaps. Repel the attack minions by placing a guard minion in a hole/corridor. Obtaining the fourth key is a little different as there is no altar here; only the key sitting on the table just out of reach. If you think for a bit, you'll realise this situation is familiar. Doing the appropriate thing will get the key.

Daniel Silveira, Brazil

A I think I can help **Wim and Lis**, who were stuck in ***Sam & Max***. To make the torch work you have to use the bulb on it (which you should have got from your office). And the torch does have something to do with the tunnel of love. First, you should go on the Cone of Tragedy, then after the ride, talk to the operator and he will give you a claim ticket. Go to the lost and found tent to claim your lost objects. You should also get a fish magnet. After that, go to the Tunnel of Love, click on the left button to turn on your torch then move it around the wall. The wall after the second display should have a fuse box – click the right button to turn off your torch and use Max on the fuse box.

Dovber Baram, Sheffield

A Here are some passwords for **Daniel Sexton**, who was stuck in ***Z***: Level 2 – Kettle, Tap, Cow, Tap, Cow, Tap; Level 3 – Mucus Tin, Tap, Telly, Tap, Cone, Telly; Level 4 – Hammer, Kettle, Tin, Kettle, Mucus Tin, Cone; Level 5 – Tin, Kettle, Mucus Tin, Kettle, Kettle, Cow; Level 6 – Telly, Telly, Cone, Tin, Mucus Tin, Hammer; Level 7 – Cone, Mucus Tin, Hammer, Cow, Cow, Kettle.

The Lee Family, Guernsey

Q I'm stuck on ***Star Trek: Klingon***, where you have to disarm a bomb. Please could you also help me with ***DS9 Harbinger***? I'm in the power room after having turned on the two reactors and gone through the lift.

Andrew Crowther, Kent

Q Does anyone know the answer to the cans puzzle in ***The 7th Guest***? Any help would be gratefully accepted.

Fudge(?), Brighton

Q Can you help me out of jam in ***Timegate***? I have got to the scriptorium. Apart from a couple of food items, I have picked up the hologram and the book (from the chapel), wooden box, quill and stiletto and, from further back, a flask of water and the shepherd's crook. I have made a pot of ink and am wearing the monk's robe. I have also had messages on examining the light on the wall of the scriptorium ("fancy that" and, when pushing "there are lots of things to do in the next room"). I am aware of the message telling me to copy from the book, but seem unable to use what looks like a piece of writing paper on one of the tables in the scriptorium. The two evident doors (one in the chapel, one double door in the scriptorium) do not seem to open no matter which of my objects I try to use. I know that the wooden box can be placed back into the cage in the chapel. So, what do I do next?

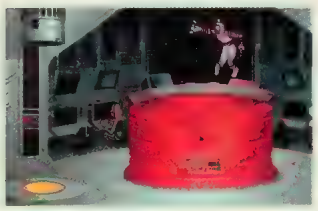
Andrew Hardman, London

again, click on control panel. To get the lens push purple four times, yellow twice and red once then exit the control panel leaving the panel lit. Click triangular button, watch video clip, click on control panel, push bottom white to clear panel, to restore power (to open doors), push purple five times, blue four times, and red once then exit control panel leaving the panel lit. Click the triangular button, go to the nexus and watch the video clip.

SPACE QUEST VI

Q Please help me! I've just bought *Space Quest VI* and I'm stuck. I can't buy the brandy to get cheat codes for Stooge Fighter 3. I know I must do something to the android in the Orion belt.

T. Johnny Tallian, Estonia



A Go to the liquor store back at the beginning of the game. LOOK! It's ET! Keep clicking the hand icon on ET until Roger pulls his finger. Now talk to the guy behind the counter and protective glass. Click your buckazoids on him. Roger will buy some of that expensive liquor. Now go back outside. Elmo will be sitting in a drunken stupor. Give him his liquor and he'll give you a cheat-sheet. Look at it in your inventory window. Write down the button combination if you have to. You'll have to enter it manually.

SINS OF THE FATHER

Q I am stuck on Day 2 of *Gabriel Knight: Sins Of The Father*. I can't get into the Gedde estate or end the day. I have given the artist his drawing back and given him the seven patterns found at the crime scene and got Moonbeam to translate the coded lettering on the tomb. Please help me.

Chris Gregory, Wokingham

A To get into the Gedde estate you need to pose as a police officer. Go and visit Moseley at the police station and while he is out of the room, take his badge from his coat. At the estate, ask Malia about herself and flirt with her! To end the day, have you tried the following? In Grandma's attic, look at the clock on the trunk. To open the clock you turn the hands on the face to 3 o'clock and the dragon to the 12 (three dragons from the poem at midday). Use the key, take the picture and letter from the drawer. Read the letter and look at the picture. Make sure that, as well as the patterns from the crime scene, you've given the artist the copied patterns from the file. PCG

If you're in a jam, or able to help those who are, then write to us now! Mark your envelope clearly with either Q&A or Over To You and send it to: PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

Below is a list of all the games previously tipped in PC GAMER, together with the issue in which they appeared. You'll find some of these solutions archived on this month's CD GAMER, with more to follow over the coming months.

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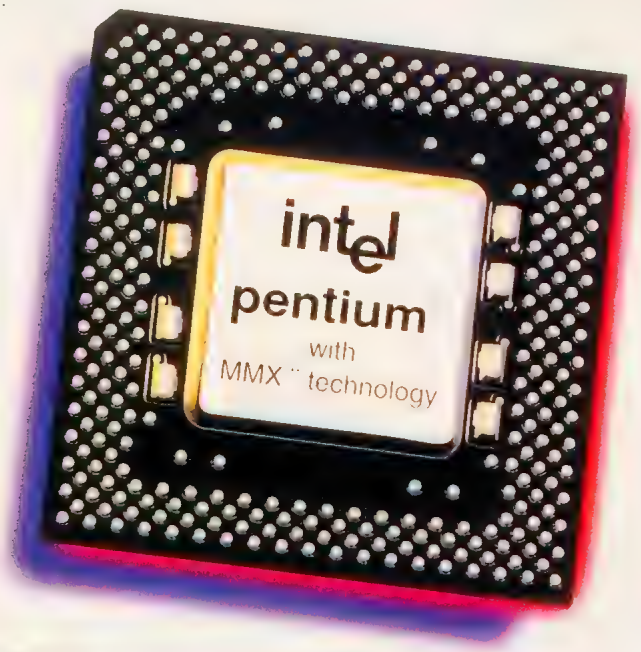
PC FORMAT

MMXtr

Intel's new range of chips are still Pentiums, but with a performance boost that makes them ideal for faster games and multimedia. But how do you go about squeezing more from a Pentium?

By SIMON WILLIAMS



YOU WANT TO BUY WHAT'S HOT for '97? Well don't buy a Pentium or a Pentium Pro, unless it has the three magic letters MMX attached to the end. MMX is Intel's new Pentium chip technology, which should give a lot of extra performance to games and multimedia software.

Intel's new MMX Pentiums will, from different reports, improve multimedia performance by between 20% and 600%. MMX promises smoother graphics, better video and faster response in all kinds of software. Although you'll need at least a 166MHz processor, it will cost little more than today's non-MMX Pentium 166.

So how do you get extra performance out of a Pentium, while keeping a chip compatible enough to plug in and work in many of today's system boards? The answer is in broadening its vocabulary.

All processors understand a limited set of instructions, which are given to them by the programs that run on them. At the simplest level, these include operations like "load a number into the processor", "add two numbers together", "save a number in memory". This type of instruction is the basis for all programs, whether it be a spunky spreadsheet or a dull *Doom* game. Quite honestly, though, the Pentium architecture could do more for the *Doom* game.

What Intel have done with MMX is to introduce extra instructions which the Pentium MMX can understand. These extra operations, 57 of them in all, are geared to the kind of things that games do, specifically to handling graphics, video and sound. Although the

On the side

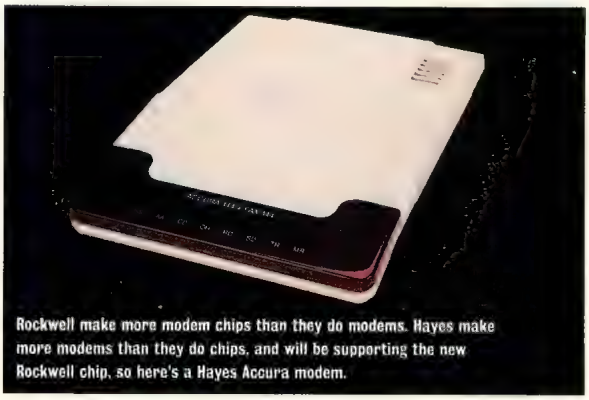
Some thoughts on recent technical developments...

Breaking the speed limit

Rockwell, the US company that make more modem chips than any other in the world, have just announced a way of nearly doubling the speed at which you can get information from the Internet. The new method is pretty devious and relies on your Internet provider, Pipex, Demon, MSN or whoever, connecting to the Net in a particular way, but most already do.

The new technique looks at the whole link between your modem and your provider in a different way. Until now, the telephone line has been considered as an analogue system, working with the series of audio tones you can often hear when your modem is making its connection. Over the last few years, though, BT have been converting the whole network to a digital one. Now the only bit that's still analogue is likely to be the connection between your house and your local exchange. Even your provider will probably connect through a digital link.

Rockwell's new design relies on this and treats the analogue bit as an 'impaired' section. Using patented techniques to get round the problem, the new modems will be



Rockwell make more modem chips than they do modems. Hayes make more modems than they do chips, and will be supporting the new Rockwell chip, so here's a Hayes Accura modem.

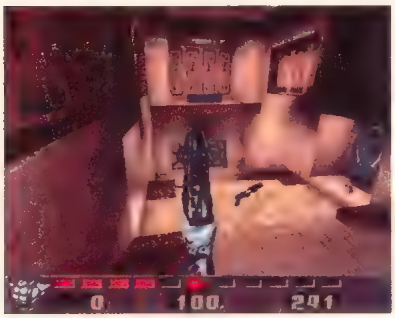
a fast

instructions are general enough to be used in a lot of different applications, they're all designed to improve some aspect of multimedia performance.

Registers approval

MMX doesn't end with these extra instructions, though. In order for the instructions to work sensibly, the chip has to have specialised registers – temporary storage areas inside it where numbers are held while they're being worked with. There's a problem here, as the MMX chips have to maintain compatibility with regular Pentiums and still run programs not designed for MMX.

To ensure this, Intel have cunningly reused the registers which are in a Pentium to handle floating point numbers. Floating point numbers are ones with decimal points, like 23.451, -17.32 or 18652.3. They're used ☛



Epic's *Unreal* (now coming through GT) will be MMX's showcase game when it's released (hopefully) in March.

Those new instructions

This is the bit for all those whose favourite outerwear is khaki and trimmed with artificial fur. The alternative MMX instructions are geared to multimedia processes and in general do more in one go than working with typical Pentium registers. Here are a couple of examples of how the new instructions can speed execution of game or multimedia code.

In many 3D games, the information for each dot (pixel) on the screen is held in a mathematical construction called a matrix – think of it like a table of numbers. The sixteen numbers held in this 4 by 4 matrix are used to represent the x, y and z co-ordinates of each pixel on the screen and its perspective information – how far away from the viewer it is. In redrawing the screen, 3D programs have to calculate new values for all these matrices, by repeatedly multiplying them by vector values containing an object's movement. With me so far?

In an existing Pentium PC, each multiplication would take 72 instructions to complete. The MMX chip has a specific PMADD instruction designed for this very task. In an MMX chip, the same multiplication would take just 28 instructions, that's less than half as many as in the Pentium.

As another example, take a 'dissolve' using alpha blending. No, go on, take it. In sensible terms, alpha blending is used in games to, for example, depict cars in fog, fish in water or – says Intel – a rabbit in a translucent tube. Can't think of many games right now involving rabbits in translucent tubes, but Intel obviously knows about these things.

Anyway, to dissolve one full 640 by 480 SVGA image in 256 colours into another, using a standard Pentium, will involve something like 1.4 billion instructions. Do it with an MMX chip and it'll take around 525 million instructions, little more than a third the number.

As a final boost to the performance of MMX, most of the new instructions execute in just one clock cycle. In other words, a 166MHz MMX Pentium will complete most instructions in just six nanoseconds. Ordinary Pentium instructions can take two or even three clock cycles to complete.

So, at least potentially, the MMX Pentium could complete many tasks in as little as a sixth of the time taken by a traditional Pentium. Preliminary tests on MMX machines in America show only around 20% improvement, but this is with software not specifically written to use MMX.

able to receive data coming down to them at 56Kbps, nearly twice the 33.6Kbps, which is the current top speed. This speed boost can only be done one way, though – transmissions from your modem will still be limited to 33.6Kbps. Since most of the time you're receiving rather than transmitting, this is unlikely to be a problem.

The new Rockwell modems should be out early this year. Although they're likely to be pricey to start with, most of the major modem manufacturers have committed to using the new chips, so competition should bring the prices down quickly. You can get more details from http://www.nb.rockwell.com.

A chip with vision

It's been tried before, but Cyrix may have better luck with the 'PC On A Chip' than other manufacturers, if they can bring their Gx86 to market in the next few months. What Cyrix say they will do is put not just a hybrid of their 5x86 and 6x86 processors on the chip, but the cores of a video adaptor, sound chip and PCI bus controller as well. In a normal PC, all these components are just that – separate chips, often on separate circuit boards.

By combining all these functions into the one chip, Cyrix claim they will be able to provide the performance of a 120MHz or 133MHz Pentium. Using the new Gx86 processor, it will also be much cheaper for computer makers to build a PC. Cyrix believe it should be possible to put together a machine with 16Mb of memory, a hard drive and six-speed CD-ROM and still make a profit selling it for $800, say £600. Although that doesn't include a monitor, it would still make a radical difference to the price of a worthwhile PC – if Cyrix manage to pull it off.

Hear no evil, speaker no evil

There are two things wrong with speakers: they're bulky and they're inefficient. Did you know, for instance, that a typical hi-fi speaker is around two to three per cent efficient?

Traditional designs also need to be big and strong, to hold the speaker coils and magnets in place. New speaker designs, however, are based around a different principle, where whole sheets of flat material are made to move backwards and forwards as one, generating sound more efficiently. They can also be hung on walls, like pictures.

in heavyweight graphics applications like Computer Aided Design and in number crunching programs like spreadsheets.

Most other programs, though, including most games, use integers, numbers like 3, 2976 or -197635, which have no decimal point. These numbers are handled in separate registers inside a Pentium, leaving the floating point ones idle. Intel reasoned that this type of program could reuse the floating point registers for multimedia tasks. By including a separate instruction in its instruction set, an MMX processor can be told by a program whether to treat the registers as floating point or MMX. Their function can be switched at any time, so both floating point and MMX instructions can be executed in the same program. Exciting stuff, eh?

The floating point registers are 64 bits wide, but when running in MMX mode they can be filled with eight bytes, four 16-bit words, two 32-bit words or a single 64-bit word. You don't need to understand why this is important – you'll be pleased to hear – but it does mean the MMX processor is very flexible in the way it can handle data.

How to get MMX

To start with, Intel will launch two MMX processors, running at 166MHz and 200MHz. There won't be any 133MHz, 120MHz or 100MHz Pentiums with MMX built in. You'll be able to buy MMX PCs, theoretically, from 8th January. In practice, as with all new processors, they may become available slowly as production ramps up. However, most suppliers will be offering them as soon as possible to keep their sales up.

There's quite a bit of talk about the pricing of the new chip, and the most interesting rumour is that the MMX version of the Pentium 166 will only be about $5 more than the current price of a standard 166. If this is the case, you would expect MMX-166 PCs to cost little more than straight Pentiums. However, it seems more likely that Intel will reduce the price of the standard Pentium 166, so there will still be a price difference between the two.

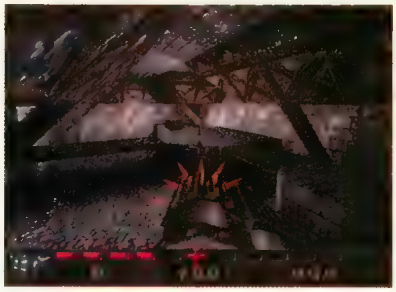
When it comes to upgrading existing Pentium-based PCs, it really depends on the system board in your PC. Although the pin arrangement is the same as a regular Pentium, the voltage at which the main core of the chip runs is just 2.8V, lower than older Pentiums. If your system board can provide this voltage, you should be okay, but many of those made before the middle of 1995 won't be able to. Intel haven't talked about them yet, but there are almost bound to be MMX OverDrive processors before too long, which will get around this supply voltage restriction.

And the rest

As for the other main processor manufacturers, AMD and Cyrix, both are looking to incorporate MMX into their chips, though they're going about it in different ways. AMD have licensed the technology from Intel and will be including it in their new range of K6 processors, due for launch early in 1997, which should be directly compatible with Pentium MMX.

Cyrix, however, are re-engineering the same facilities in 'clean-room' conditions, from the ground up. They have some very clever processor engineers – the whole 6x86 chip was developed in this way, don't forget – and claim they will have MMX built into their new range of processors, code-named M2, when they're launched this spring.

So it all looks bright and breezy for PC games in 1997. The extra wellie MMX gives multimedia and games software will be complemented by other new technologies, such as Power VR and DVD. By this time next year, there's no doubt that PC games will be even further ahead of those available on any other platform. PCG

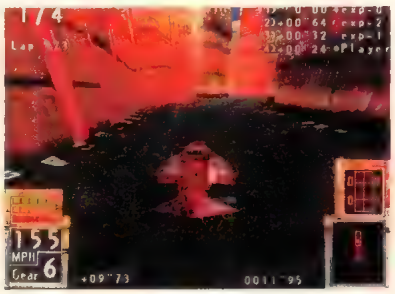


Games house response

Most games houses will be supporting MMX, though not all will necessarily be including support in every title, certainly at the beginning. Some will be shipping MMX and standard versions of their games as separate products, while others will include both versions on the same CD. Intel have included a simple way for a game to tell whether it's running on an MMX chip, so selection should happen automatically.

MMX games that we already know are on the way include *Rebel Moon Rising* from Fenris Wolf, a 3D action game which will use full-motion video at high frame rates on a 256 colour 640 by 400 screen. UbiSoft are finishing *Pod*, a 30fps 3D racing game based on the 'Last

MMX's 57 new instruction sets will remain totally transparent to the end user, but for programmers specialising in assembly for low-level graphics routines it is causing much excitement.



Danger Moped Out Of Nowhere City' scenario, on a distant world imperilled by a deadly virus.

These are still relatively small titles compared to the heavyweight games that are arriving from next spring onwards. Foremost amongst these is Epic's *Unreal*. EA, Virgin and, indeed, most other developers are already experimenting with the development chips, and the reports from the programmers who focus on assembly language for their graphics routines are particularly encouraging.

The only slight problem with the creation of new games is that the vast bulk of existing Pentiums won't support MMX for many months. MMX will, however, enjoy much greater support than any of the new video 'standards', like Glint, nVidia or Power VR, simply because it's Intel making them and Intel selling them in their millions.

Abort, Retry, Fail

Q: The new PC I bought recently has no details of joystick connections, so could you tell me:

1. Is it possible to connect two joysticks to a single 15-pin socket for two-player games? If so, where can you obtain a lead to do this – at a reasonable price?

2. Could you provide a complete pin-out of a PC 15-pin port? I would like to adapt my old 9-pin Amiga joysticks to this standard.

Steve Callington, Solihull

A: *Shame on your PC supplier. Here are your answers:*

1. Yes, it's possible to run two joysticks from one PC joystick port. In fact, it's designed to support two. You need something like the AlfaTwin joystick splitter, a snip at £12.99 from Premier Mail Order (01268 271172). The same unit will also let you combine the controls of both joysticks to use one of the multi-button devices now available.

2. I could provide the pin-outs, in fact I'll go away and draw a diagram right now, but it won't really help you. The Amiga's joysticks are digital, using micro-switches which are either on or off, while the PC provides analogue ports, using variable resistor controls. The two types are incompatible.

Q: I was thinking of buying an extra 8Mb of memory to upgrade by Pentium 60 machine to 16Mb of RAM, but have been told by a couple of people I would be better off spending the money upgrading the processor. One person said I would be wasting my time with extra RAM in a P60, only 486 machines would benefit from extra RAM. Or is 8Mb plus of RAM only worthwhile on high spec Pentiums (90MHz plus), as somebody else told me?

John Francis, Edinburgh

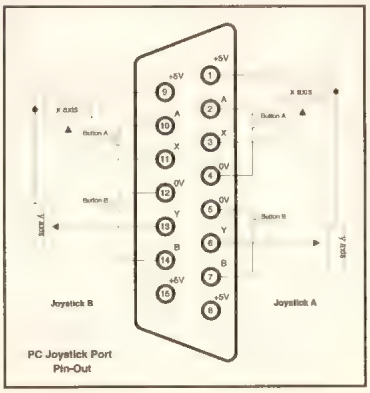
A: *No, no. The faster the processor you have the less memory you need. Most Pentium Pros run with no memory at all, you know, which is why they're so cheap. There are some bizarrely ill-informed people around.*

Here's what you should believe: Any machine will benefit from extra memory, regardless of the processor, but only if it's running programs that can make use of it. The problem is that different programs use memory differently. Most older DOS-based games, for instance, need as much of the basic 640K available as possible. Adding extra memory for running these games will make little difference, since it will all lie above this 640K area.

Windows-based games and those DOS games which start up protected mode operating systems of their own (lots do – look for a message when they start), will be able to use anything you add, up to the maximum they're designed for. All versions of Windows will be able to use any extra memory you add and will run more quickly with 16Mb than 8Mb.

Q: I'm thinking of upgrading my CPU from a 486DX2/66. I've been told about the 63MHz and 83MHz Pentium OverDrives, but would like to go faster than this. Can I put an ordinary Pentium chip in my PC or one of the faster Pentium OverDrives? Which would you recommend?

Jenny Knight, Wimbledon



PC Joystick Port Pin-Out

A: *There's still a lot of confusion about OverDrive chips and what they can and can't do. Here are your Intel options: With a 486DX2/66, you should be able to fit any of four different OverDrive processors – a 486DX4/75, a 486DX4/100, a 63MHz Pentium or an 83MHz Pentium. That's it. The other OverDrive chips are only suitable for upgrading PCs which are already running Pentiums. 486 and Pentium chips are mutually incompatible, except for OverDrives – you can't put one type into a system board designed for the other.*

If you broaden your requirements to include chips made by AMD, you should also be able to fit DX4/100, DX4/120 or 5x86-P75 chips from AMD. This last device is also available in an OverDrive-like product called the Kingston Turbo chip. The OverDrive-style solution is the most likely to work, as not all 486 system boards can take all these different go-faster 486 chips.

Q: We have recently got a powerful machine – P100, 16Mb RAM and a good (32 bit colours) Matrox graphics card. The thing is, playing a game like *Toshinden*, you still can't tell the head from the body! The only options I can see are to upgrade the CPU or RAM or to wait a couple of months for the 3D cards. Can you please help?

Joe Harris, Isle of Wight

A: *I'm less clear than your video adaptor seems to be. What do you mean by "you still can't tell the head from the body". Is the picture too dark, does it have too few colours or are you just poor on anatomy? The configuration of PC you describe should be capable of running* Toshinden *with crystal clarity, so if things aren't clear, I'd suggest you check that all the hardware's working correctly, certainly before upgrading it.*

Send your technical questions to: Abort, Retry, Fail?, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. Or e-mail them to: pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk.

The Money Pit

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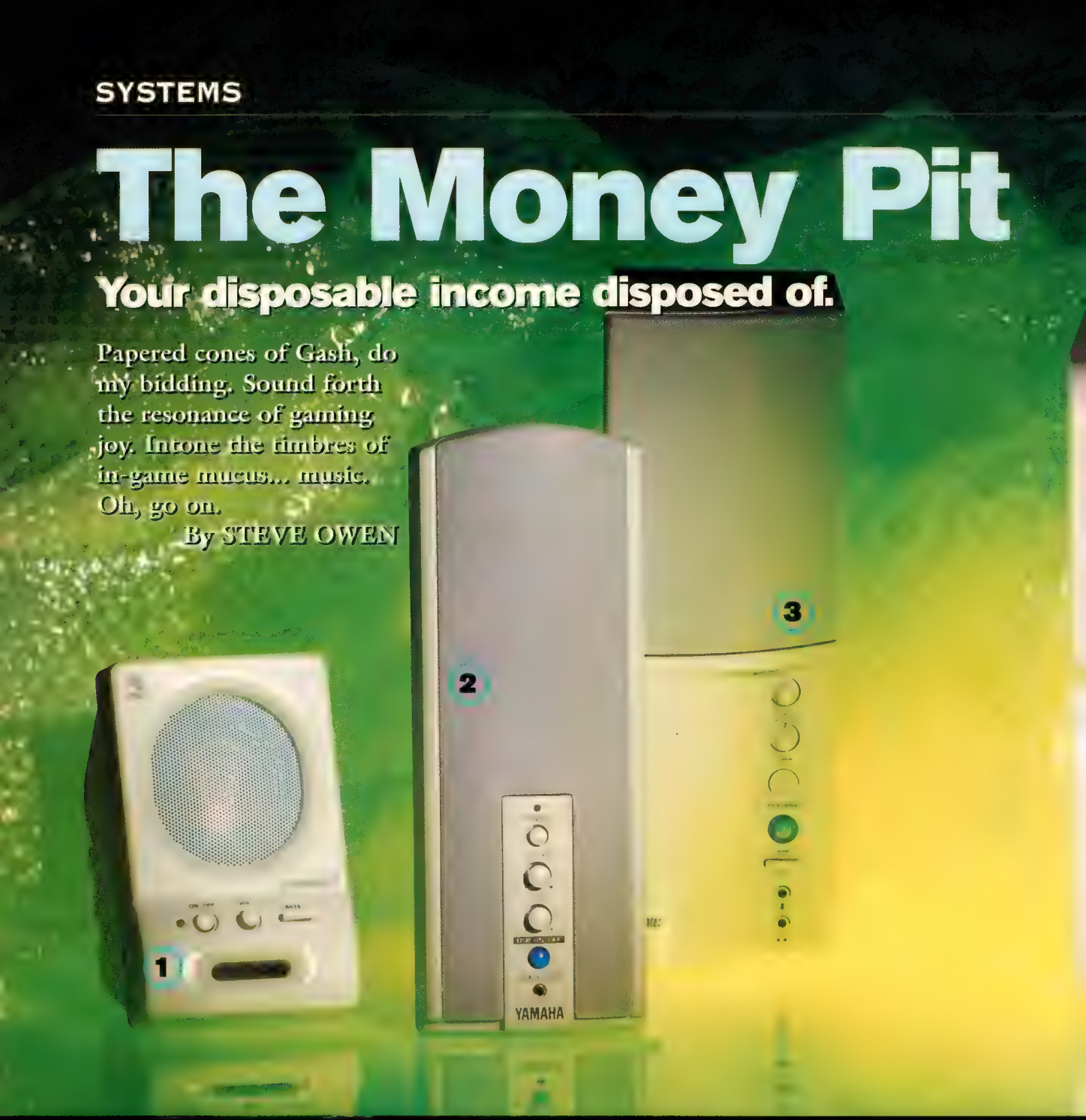
Papered cones of Gash, do my bidding. Sound forth the resonance of gaming joy. Intone the timbres of in-game mucus... music. Oh, go on.

By STEVE OWEN



1. ScreenBeat 25

£30 – Logic 3 0181 900 0024

Although they may look a lot like the cheap speakers that got thrown in with your original PC, the ScreenBeat 25s are surprisingly good quality. It's not astounding by any means, but if you just need something cheap and would prefer it if it wasn't nasty, then at least you won't be unpleasantly surprised. The bass control is mostly ineffective, as you can imagine. There's no decent thump, just a kind of deep nasally wheeze. It's notoriously difficult to get good bass from small speakers, though, so Logic 3 are forgiven. **77%**

2. YST-M20DSP

£79 – Yamaha 01908 366700

How much we love the Yamaha sub-woofer that we reviewed six months ago. So how disappointed we were that these attractively slim speakers sound like they have so little belly. These Yamaha speakers are too light, and the quality of music is much the same. Lacking any real throat, they didn't seem to gel that well with a Labtec sub-woofer, although fared better with the Yamaha sub. The DSP (surround processor) actually cleans the sound up as well as throwing it outwards. You should leave it permanently engaged. **71%**

3. LCS-1024

£80 – Labtec 01252 629900

Wonderful, wonderful speakers. Oh that's what these are. Wonderful, wonderful speakers. Despite being quite sizeable, an unattractive cross arm spans the top of your monitor, holding the cones at ear level and allowing you to handily position other desk items below them. That is, if you are fortunate enough to own a 17-inch monitor, otherwise they look like Jaws from the Bond films sitting on a milking stool. Crystal clear sound, too, and great bass, even without a sub-woofer. They come heartily recommended. **94%**

We're surrounded

Labtec's little plug-in surround sound spatializer is an interesting way of pretending you've got four speakers around you when you actually have just two in front. Simply plugging between your sound card and speakers, the adjustable dial uses clever gizmology to fool your brain into thinking the sound is coming from around you.

Standard stereo signals sound wider and more impressive, whereas sound effects in the current glut of Dolby Surround games (Novalogic's *F-22* springs to mind) are almost thrown behind you. Very clever and surprisingly effective.

The Imager 3D Audio System costs £40. Coo, bargain.

4. Zi-Fi Bass

£90 – Zydec 01386 769400

Huge sub-woofers that can be placed under your desk and simultaneously used as footstools have always been popular with me, so it was a slightly strangled squeal of delight that accompanied the arrival of this particular box. Sadly, though, it's not just the cheap-looking styling that is upsetting. Although certainly bass heavy, the bass lacks any follow-through. You just feel a wet thump, without the inaudible vibrations that good bass provides. There's also plenty of shrill treble, but the Zi-Fi Bass lacks any mid range. Not perfect, I'm afraid. **54%**

5. LCS-1022

£70 – Labtec 01252 629900

How do I write 80 words on a set of speakers that are exactly the same as the LCS-1024 except that they don't come with the mounting bracket or mute button?

Um...

Tum-de-tum.

Ten quid is a lot of money for a mounting bracket and a mute button, really.

Rather than mute the sound, you could just turn the power off.

And string works as well as a mounting bracket.

There, all done. **95%**

6. ScreenBeat 3

£16 – Logic 3 0181 900 0024

Whereas the ScreenBeat 25s just looked like they'd get bundled with your PC, the ScreenBeat 3 speakers *were* bundled with your PC. Still, at £16 you can't really complain if your room doesn't shake to the sound of 'home' tunes. Functional, but you really should be advised in the strongest way that I can currently muster after such a lovely lunch to save up a bit more money and go for the ScreenBeat 25s. And once you've gone that far you might as well save up a bit more dough and get the LCS-1022s instead. Spoil yourself. **60%**

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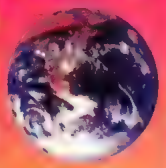

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ISSUE 10 ON SALE NOW!

PC GAMER swap shop

Once again it's time for dealers in PC paraphernalia to hit the floor of the PC GAMER commodity markets waving their little coupons in the air shouting "Buy, buy" or "Sell, sell" depending on the heart condition of the Japanese Prime Minister or the latest rumours of British arms sales to kids on Moss Side. If you wish to trade your stocks or tender your deathmatch services via the Swap Shop, then notify us using the coupon below and hurry it along to PC GAMER, Swap Shop, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW.

GAMES FOR SALE

● ***C&C*** £20 ono, *Caesar II* £10, any offers for *Jane's AH64 Longbow*. Swaps considered – Tel 01793 829381, evenings, Wilts.

● ***TIE Fighter*** for £10, or swap for *Rise Of The Triad*. Write to – Leon, 3 Glentworth Crescent, Skegness, Lincs PE25 2TG.

● ***Offside***, *Actua Soccer* and *Future Shock*, all for £12. *Rebel Assault 2*, *TIE Fighter*, *SWOS* £10 each, *System Shock*, *X-Wing*, *Ultimate Doom* £6 each. All boxed and in good nick – Tel 0378 398151 Warwickshire

● ***IndyCar Racing*** and *Sensible Soccer Int* (World Championships) £5 each or £8 for both – Tel 01978 853819 Wrexham

● ***Descent 2*** CD, so new it's still wrapped for £20. Also, 24 pin colour printer £90 – Tel 01279 724193 Herts.

● ***Quake*** for sale, new, boxed and in good condition for £25 – Tel 01202 840056 Dorset

● ***Megarace 2*** for sale, good as new for £20 and Also *Fade To Black* for £10 plus P&P – Tel 01670 519968 Northumberland.

● ***Space Bucks CD***, a space game from Sierra £12, Power Desk 95 a great program launching utility for £12, Word 6 Windows Book, mint condition, 300 pages £6 - Tel Peter 01954 261032 Cambridgeshire.

● ***Normality CD-ROM*** for the bargain price of £15 or swap for *Monopoly* – Tel 01342 810848.

● ***MechWarrior 2*** £25 ono or swap. *Award Winners Gold Edition* consisting of *Sensible Soccer*, *Elite*, *Zool* and *Jimmy White's Snooker*, £15ono – Tel David 01504 765850 Londonderry

● ***Wing Commander IV*** and *11th Hour* £15 and *Terminal Velocity*, *Apache Longbow*, *NASCAR+tracks*, *Award Winners*, *Future Shock*, *Dark Forces*, *Destruction Derby*, *IndyCar+tracks* – Tel Stuart 01422 256765 Halifax.

● ***C&C*** £20, *SimCity 2000*, *Magic Carpet*, *Dune 2*, *Syndicate Plus* £5 each, *GP Manager* and *Phantasmagoria* £15, all inc P&P – Tel Andy 01865 391504 Oxfordshire after 5.30pm.

● ***Warhammer:*** *Shadow Of Horned Rat* £15, *Terra Nova* £15, *Civ II* 15, *DOTT* £5, *7th Guest* £5, *Tracer* £7, all in excellent boxed condition on CD, offers and swaps considered – Tel 0117 9511084 Bristol.

● ***Settlers 2*** £15, *Riddle Of Master Lu* £10, *Guilty And Innocent* £5, *Hand Of Fate*(HD) £5, all in mint condition – Tel 01278 722118 Somerset

● ***The Dig*** and *Magic Carpet 2* for £15, *Sam & Max* and *Theme Park* for £10, *Discworld*, unboxed, for £5. All on CD – Tel 01279 413763 Essex

HARDWARE FOR SALE

● **Diamond Viper VLB**, 2Mb VRAM graphics card, cost nearly £300, sell for £150 ono – Tel Steve 01243 536988 Chichester.

● **Multimedia computer,** 8Mb, Quad CD-ROM, DX4/100, quality sound with music. Keen price for loving home £495 – Tel 01684 297372 Gloucestershire.

● **Thrustmaster** rudder pedals. Alloy construction, boxed, excellent condition £55 – Tel 01795 431090 Kent

● **VLB Grafixstar 500**, 64bit graphics accelerator, MPEG, 2Mb, EDO, new and boxed, £60 inc P&P – Tel Andy 01865 391504 after 6pm Oxfordshire.

● **Vigien P133**, 16Mb RAM, 1.6 GIG, HDD, 2Mb, Matrox Millenium, X8 CD-ROM, 28 8 Baud modem, 17" monitor, sound card, speakers, lots of software, £1,700 ono

● **Monitor,** 14" colour Philips CM8833II artist series, excellent sound and picture, PC ready. Swap for PC compatible colour laser printer or fast modem and CD-ROM software.

WANTED

● ***Monopoly*** for less than £20. If you can help – Tel 01342 810848 West Sussex.

● ***Warcraft 2*** Will swap for *Worms* plus *Worms Reinforcements*, *Syndicate Plus*, *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* or *TIE Fighter* – Tel 01932 840590 Surrey.

● **Visual Basic** or Zorteck 'C', must be cheap as I'm only 11 years old – Tel 01440 763308 Suffolk.

PLAYMATES

● **People** wanted for *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Apache Longbow*, *Quake*, *C&C* carnage over Internet – Tel Steve, call sign 'Snowy', on 0171 288 1518 London

● ***Warcraft 2*** opponents in Cambridge. For a modem game – Tel Peter 01954 261032 Cambridgeshire.

PC GAMER swap shop

Please slip my advert into the next available issue.

Section:

Hardware for sale ☐ Games for sale ☐ Wanted ☐ Contacts ☐ Messages ☐ Playmates ☐

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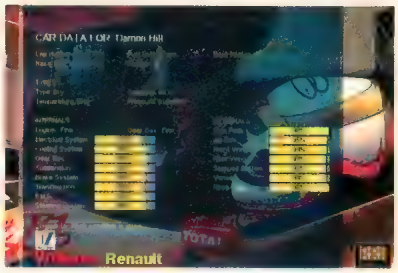
Win! A

ON PAGES 122-123 OF THIS ISSUE may be found the nigh on joyous review of *GP Manager 2* – yet another podium topper from MicroProse. Naturally in jubilant mood after hearing *GPM2* fully merited its Game Of Distinction award, MicroProse were all for coming round and showering us with high-pressure champagne. But fearful of the pile of smoking Pentiums we would be left with after such a drenching, we managed to convince them that perhaps it would be simpler if they showed us their joy by providing a Pentium for one of our readers. So instead of destroying the heart of PC GAMER with one pop of a cork, MicroProse have instead come up with a PC Michael Schumacher would be proud to be seated in. It's a Pentium 166, of course, with a muscular 16Mb of RAM, a big 17" monitor, speakers, sound card and all the other essential bits and bobs like keyboard, mouse and, well, everything. What's more, MicroProse felt so good after handing that lot over that they also decided to throw caution to the wind and fling ten copies of *Grand Prix Manager 2* into the highly desirable bargain. So if you're interested in getting your driving gloves on this pile-up of goodies, then clock the terms and conditions of the appropriately themed competition over there.



PENTIUM 166!

THE "Unless I'm very mistaken" Competition

Now then, *Grand Prix Manager 2* would be of no use to man (except perhaps to Frank Williams and a dozen of his closest rivals) nor beast if it wasn't for the regular insights into Grand Prix strategies provided by the ever coherent Murray Walker. It's difficult to even have a conversation about Formula One without somebody fondly recalling one of his endearing cobbles such as, "Do my eyes deceive me or is Senna's car sounding a bit rough?" But we should all acknowledge that if it wasn't for his impromptu tutorials during the period before pitstops when nothing else happens, none of us would have the first clue about the black arts of fuel stop strategies or any of the other fascinating tasks facing a F1 team chief. So in order to ensure that our Pentium winner fully appreciates the enormous debt we all owe the avuncular Murray, we want you (aha ha ha haaa) to make a tribute impersonation of him in full flight. You could choose one of his finest moments like "You can cut the atmosphere with a cricket stump", or just make it up as you go along. If you're a little worried about your ability to capture Murray's distinctive tones, then you could always try to enhance your impression with props. Make full use of the vast capabilities of today's media and go completely over the top if you like.

Send in your tape (audio, video) with the form on the right firmly attached to it, to: **Contest 38, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW** to arrive no later than 28th February.

The "Perfect Marriage" contest winner was Chris Piddington of Cardiff.

I'm quite taken by the idea of winning a Pentium 166 and so enclose my Murray Walker impersonation and any applicable accessories.

Name.....

.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

My most wanted

This bit's optional, but we'd like you to let us know the five forthcoming PC games you're most looking forward to, to aid us in compiling our Readers Most Wanted chart on page 30.

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

Send this coupon with your entry to: Contest 38, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW by 28th February 1997.

Rules

1 Entries originating from Future Publishing or MicroProse employees will be black flagged.
2 Entries arriving after 28th February won't win.
3 Anyone arguing with the editor will be wasting their time.

Fish out of water

No. 6
LARA CROFT FROM TOMB RAIDER

The experiment was meant to end, but no-one can find the stop-cock. The machine is out of control. We are powerless to resist.

IT WAS OUR AVOWED INTENTION to finally lay to rest our unnatural science, melding characters from one world with the lifestyles of another. And as one hallowed leader bowed gracefully to the next, the suggestion was made, voted on and unanimously passed that the Machine should be switched off. It was only after Jonathan had left for Australia for his first day's shooting that we realised he was the only man who knew how to stop It.

Vainly we attempted to pull out the plug and even switch It off at the wall, but the Machine was no longer dependant upon us and our primitive energy sources. It had become self-sufficient, determined to continue the experiments we had started. It knew that the last person we wanted to subject to the torturous relocation exercise was the curvaceous Lara Croft. But we were no longer in control. The Machine...

GENE MACHINE

Within seconds of landing in Victorian England, Lara was clearly mistaken for a lady of the night and arrested for dressing inappropriately. Several bobbies were required

to restrain her firmly, as our feisty heroine struggled to unholster the two automatic weapons which would surely have dropped the Boys in Blue to their knees. Thankfully, a spectacular sideways leap freed her from her manly manacles. She came a cropper, though, when, in an attempt to evade over 70 Busies and nearly 200 lank-haired men in long smoking jackets, she swallow-dived from Tower Bridge into the Thames, only to find that it was frozen. A sickening crunch accompanied the buckling of limbs.

Adaptability: 2/10

EURO 96

England's most successful and exciting sporting moment of the '90s, the Machine assumed, is

no place for a lady. Psychotic in the extreme, It placed buxom Lara in the role of England Manager. While the likes of Gazza and even the introverted Shearer were delighted by their new boss, the essentially masculine nature of the sport meant that no-one took Miss Croft's tactical suggestions and somersaults seriously. We're not saying it's right. It's just the way it is.

After merely minutes of sexual taunts, Lara lost her temper and shot Newcastle's future 15-million-pound signing. England are knocked out in the first round. The stock market crashes. Waves of anger sweep the nation.

Adaptability: 0/10

C&C: RED ALERT

Surely such a gun-toting, violence-obsessed, thinking-person's game is ideal territory for someone as 'spunky' as our *Tomb Raider* lass. What could the Machine be thinking?

It all became clear as she opened her orders. Lara is to become Tanya's second in command. It could have gone either way were we to lay bets, but as the Machine knew these two gun toting young ladies with attitude did not get on. A bitch fight in a muddy field somewhere east of

Hamburg brought the two opposing armies together to watch. Give peace a chance.

Adaptability: 4/10

DUKE NUKEM 3D

Fancying itself as a bit of a Shane Black, the Machine decided to create the ideal action film scenario. Butch bloke with large gun and attitude finds himself working with tough woman with two large guns and attitude. Initially, of course, their egos prevent conversational compatibility, although observers can laugh wryly at the dry wit passing between the two and the intense sexual chemistry. As each saves the other's life by blasting away an army of Pigs, their surface arguments give way to mutual respect and love.

The Machine is offered several million dollars for the screen rights and retires to Bali, choosing to experiment with sand, water and food colouring. It seems that creating attractive stained glass windows is infinitely preferable to experimenting on hapless game characters.

Adaptability: 10/10

Overall adaptability: 4/10 PCG

NEXT MONTH IN PC GAMER

The February issue of PC GAMER will be available on Friday 17th January.

With addiction to *Red Alert* rife, we'll be giving away a 100-page book to help you through the game. Rowan's *Flying Corps* and *SkyNET* will be reviewed and we still haven't given up on *Diablo*. Plus, an exclusive look at MicroProse's *Star Trek: Generations*.

SWIV 3D

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